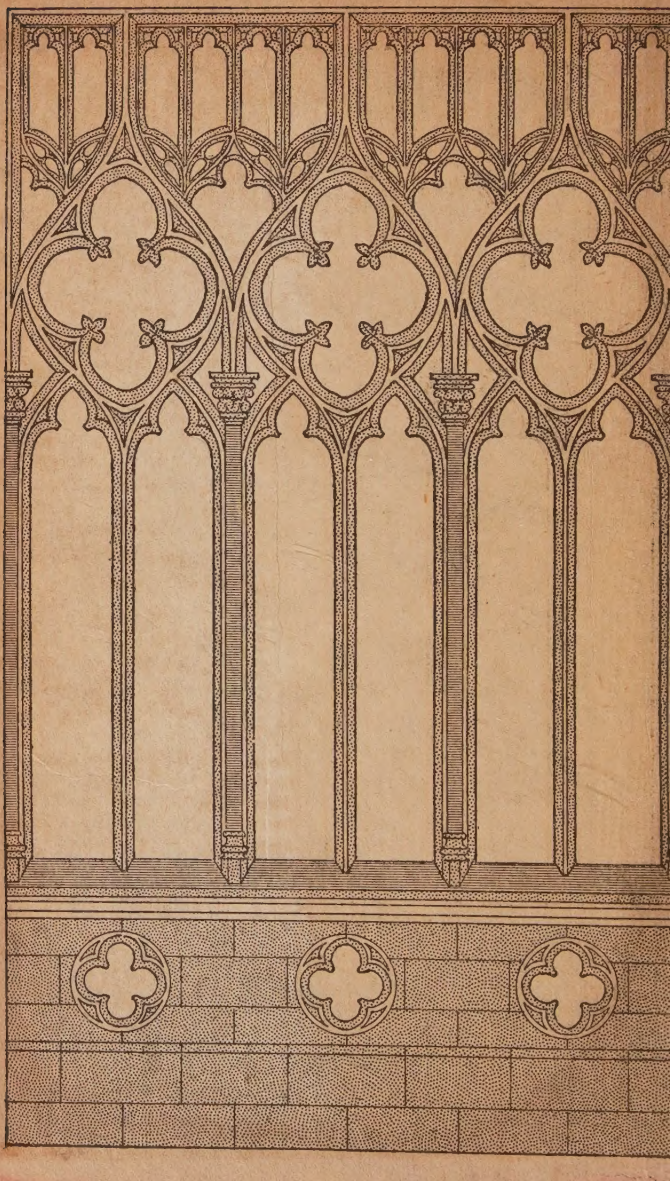

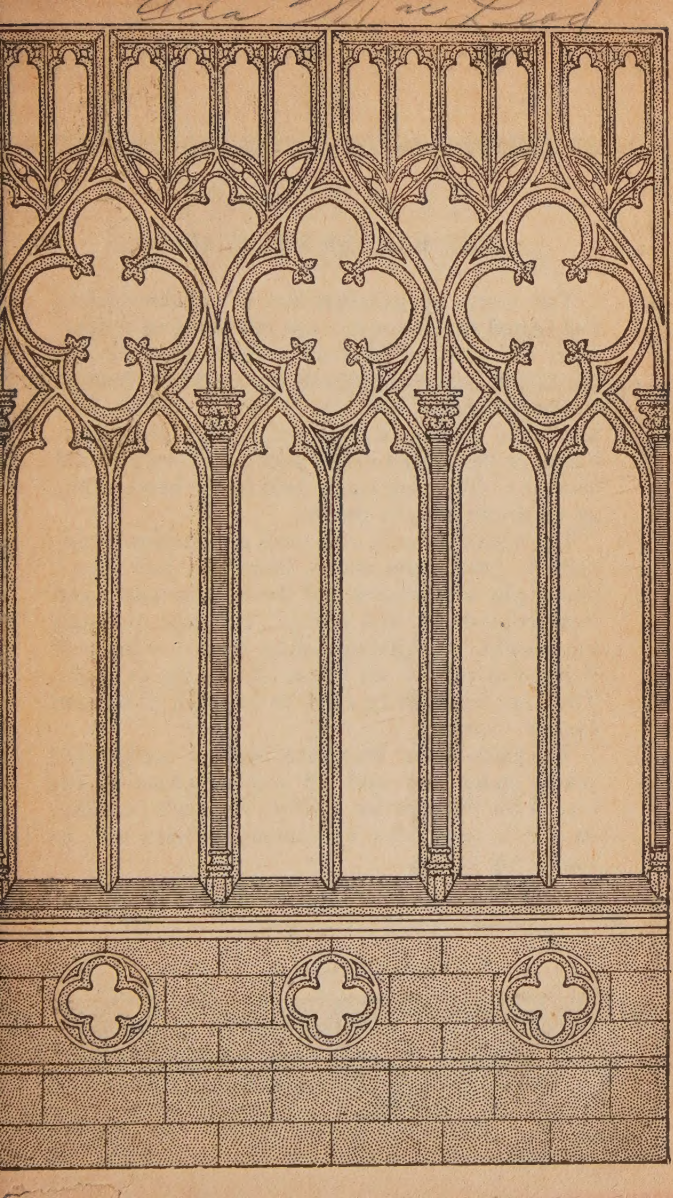

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LUCAS LEXOW,
Editor.

ISHMAEL

Or, IN THE DEPTHS

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

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ISHMAEL

OR

"IN THE DEPTHS"

CHAPTER I

THE SISTERS

"WELL, if there be any truth in the old adage, young Herman Brudenell will have a prosperous life; for really this is a lovely day for the middle of April—the sky is just as sunny and the air as warm as if it were June," said Hannah Worth, looking out from the door of her hut upon a scene as beautiful as ever shone beneath the splendid radiance of an early spring morning.

"And what is that old adage you talk of, Hannah?" inquired her younger sister, who stood braiding the locks of her long black hair before the cracked looking-glass that hung above the rickety chest of drawers.

"Why, la, Nora, don't you know? The adage is as old as the hills and as true as the heavens, and it is this, that a man's twenty-first birthday is an index to his after life:—if it be clear, he will be fortunate; if cloudy, unfortunate."

"Then I should say that young Mr. Brudenell's fortune will be a splendid one; for the sun is dazzling!" said Nora, as she wound the long sable plait of hair around her head in the form of a natural coronet, and secured the end behind with—a thorn! "And, now, how do I look? Ain't you proud of me?" she archly inquired, turning with "a smile of conscious beauty born" to the inspection of her elder sister.

That sister might well have answered in the affirmative had she considered personal beauty a merit of high order; for few palaces in this world could boast a princess so superbly beautiful as this peasant girl that this poor hut contained. Beneath those rich sable tresses was a high broad forehead as white as snow; slender black eyebrows so well defined and so perfectly arched that they gave a

singularly open and elevated character to the whole countenance; large dark gray eyes, full of light, softened by long sweeping black lashes; a small, straight nose; oval, blooming cheeks; plump, ruddy lips that, slightly parted, revealed glimpses of the little pearly teeth within; a well-turned chin a face with this peculiarity, that when she was pleased it was her eyes that smiled and not her lips; a face, in short full of intelligence and feeling that might become thought and passion. Her form was noble—being tall, finely proportioned, and richly developed.

Her beauty owed nothing to her toilet—her only decoration was the coronet of her own rich black hair; her only hair pin was a thorn; her dress indeed was a masterpiece of domestic manufacture,—the cotton from which it was made having been carded, spun, woven, and dyed by Miss Hannah's own busy hands; but as it was only a coarse blue fabric, after all, it would not be considered highly ornamental; it was new and clean, however, and Nora was well pleased with it, as with playful impatience she repeated her question:

"Say! ain't you proud of me now?"

"No," replied the elder sister, with assumed gravity; "I am proud of your dress because it is my own handiwork, and it does me credit; but as for you—"

"I am Nature's handiwork, and I do her credit!" interrupted Nora, with gay self-assertion.

"I am quite ashamed of you, you are so vain!" continued Hannah, completing her sentence.

"Oh, vain, am I? Very well, then, another time I will keep my vanity to myself. It is quite as easy to conceal as to confess, you know; though it may not be quite as good for the soul," exclaimed Nora, with merry perversity, as she danced off in search of her bonnet.

She had not far to look; for the one poor room contained all of the sisters' earthly goods. And they were easily summed up—a bed in one corner, a loom in the other, a spinning-wheel in the third, and a corner-cupboard in the fourth; a chest of drawers sat against the wall between the bed and the loom, and a pine table against the opposite wall between the spinning-wheel and the cupboard; four wooden chairs sat just wherever they could be crowded. There was no carpet on the floor, no paper on the walls. There was but one door and one window to the hut, and they were in front. Opposite them at the back of the room was a wide fire-place, with a rude mantel shelf above it, adorned with

old brass candlesticks as bright as gold. Poor as this hut was, the most fastidious fine lady need not have feared to sit down within it, it was so purely clean.

The sisters were soon ready, and after closing up their wee hut as cautiously as if it contained the wealth of India, they set forth, in their blue cotton gowns and white cotton bonnets, to attend the grand birthday festival of the young heir of Brudenell Hall.

Hannah and Leonora Worth were orphans, living alone together in the hut on the hill and supporting themselves by spinning and weaving.

Hannah, the eldest, was but twenty-eight years old, yet looked forty; for, having been the eldest sister, the mother-sister, of a large family of orphan children, all of whom had died except the youngest, Leonora,—her face wore that anxious, haggard, care-worn and prematurely aged look peculiar to women who have the burdens of life too soon and too heavily laid upon them. Her black hair was even streaked here and there with gray. But with all this there was not the least trace of impatience or despondency in that all-enduring face. When grave, its expression was that of resignation; when gay—and even she could be gay at times—its smile was as sunny as Leonora's own. Hannah had a lover as patient as Job, or as herself, a poor fellow who had been constant to her for twelve years, and whose fate resembled her own; for he was the father of all his orphan brothers and sisters as she had been the mother of hers. Of course, these poor lovers could not dream of marriage; but they loved each other all the better upon that very account, perhaps.

Leonora was ten years younger than her sister, eighteen, well grown, well developed, blooming, beautiful, gay and happy as we have described her. She had not a care, or regret, or sorrow in the world. She was a bird, the hut was her nest and Hannah her mother, whose wings covered her. These sisters were very poor; not, however, as the phrase is understood in the large cities, where, notwithstanding the many charitable institutions for the mitigation of poverty, scores of people perish annually from cold and hunger; but as it is understood in the rich lower counties of Maryland, where forests filled with game and rivers swarming with fish afford abundance of food and fuel to even the poorest hutters, however destitute they might be of proper shelter, clothing, or education.

CHAPTER II

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

THE sisters had not seen their young landlord since he was a lad of ten years of age, at which epoch he had been sent to Europe to receive his education. He had but recently been recalled home by his widowed mother, for the purpose of entering upon his estate and celebrating his majority in his patrimonial mansion by giving a dinner and ball in the house to all his kindred and friends, and a feast and dance in the barn to all his tenants and laborers.

It was said that his lady mother and his two young lady sisters, haughty and repellent women that they were, had objected to entertaining his dependents, but the young gentleman was resolved that they should enjoy themselves. And he had his way.

Nora had no recollection whatever of Herman Brudenell who had been taken to Europe while she was still a baby so now, her curiosity being stimulated, she plied Hannah with a score of tiresome questions about him.

"Is he tall, Hannah, dear? Is he very handsome?"

"How can I tell? I have not seen him since he was ten years old."

"But what is his complexion—is he fair or dark? and what is the color of his hair and eyes? Surely, you can tell that at least."

"Yes; his complexion, as well as I can recollect it, was freckled, and his hair sandy, and his eyes green."

"Oh-h! the horrid fright! a man to scare bad children into good behavior! But then that was when he was but ten years old; he is twenty-one to-day; perhaps he is much improved."

They had now reached the top of the hill and come upon a full view of the house and grounds.

The house, as I said, was a very elegant edifice of white freestone; it was two stories in height, and had airy piazzas running the whole length of the front, both above and below; a stately portico occupied the center of the lower piazza, having on each side of it the tall windows of the drawing-rooms. This portico and all these windows were now wide open, mutely proclaiming welcome to all comers

The beautifully laid out grounds were studded here and there with tents pitched under the shade trees, for the accommodation of the out-door guests, who were now assembling rapidly.

But the more honored guests of the house had not yet begun to arrive.

And none of the family were as yet visible.

On reaching the premises the sisters were really embarrassed, not knowing where to go, and finding no one to direct them.

At length a strange figure appeared upon the scene—a dwarfish mulatto, with a large head, bushy hair, and having the broad forehead and high nose of the European, with the thick lips and heavy jaws of the African; with an ashen gray complexion, and a penetrating, keen and sly expression of the eyes. With this strange combination of features he had also the European intellect with the African utterance. He was a very gifted original, whose singularities of genius and character will reveal themselves in the course of this history, and he was also one of those favored old family domestics whose power in the house was second only to that of the master, and whose will was law to all his fellow servants; he had just completed his fiftieth year, and his name was Jovial.

And he now approached the sisters, saying:

"Mornin', Miss Hannah—mornin', Miss Nora. Come to see de show? De young heir hab a fool for his master for de fust time to-day."

"We have come to the birthday celebration; but we do not know where we ought to go—whether to the house or the tents," said Hannah.

The man tucked his tongue into his cheek and squinted at the sisters, muttering to himself:

"I should like to see de mist'ess' face, ef you two was to present yourselves at de house!"

Then speaking aloud, he said:

"De house be for de quality, an' de tents for de colored gemmen and ladies; an' de barn for de laborin' classes ob de whites. Shall I hab de honor to denounce you to de barn?"

"I thank you, yes, since it is there we are expected to go," said Hannah.

Jovial led the way to an immense barn that had been cleaned out and decorated for the occasion. The vast room was adorned with festoons of evergreens and paper flowers.

At the upper end was hung the arms of the Brudenells
Benches were placed along the walls for the accommodatio
of those who might wish to sit. The floor was chalke
for the dancers.

"Dere, young women, dere you is," said Jovial loftily, a
he introduced the sisters into this room, and retired.

There were some thirty-five or forty present, includin
men, women, and children, but no one that was known t
the sisters. They therefore took seats in a retired corne
from which they watched the company.

"How many people there are! Where could they all hav
come from?" inquired Nora.

"I do not know. From a distance, I suppose. People wi
come a long way to a feast like this. And you know that nc
only were the tenants and laborers invited, but they wer
asked to bring all their friends and relations as well!" sai
Hannah.

"And they seemed to have improved the opportunity.
added Nora.

"Hush, my dear; I do believe here come Mr. Brudenell an
the ladies," said Hannah.

And even as she spoke the great doors of the barn wer
thrown open, and the young landlord and his family entere

First came Mr. Brudenell, a young gentleman of mediu
height, and elegantly rather than strongly built; his feature
were regular and delicate; his complexion fair and clear; h
hair of a pale, soft, golden tint; and in contrast to all thi
his eyes were of a deep, dark, burning brown, full of fir
passion, and fascination. There was no doubt about it—h
was beautiful! I know that is a strange term to apply to
man, but it is the only true and comprehensive one to cha
acterize the personal appearance of Herman Brudenell. H
was attired in a neat black dress suit, without ornamen
of any kind; without even a breastpin or a watch chain.

Upon his arm leaned his mother, a tall, fair woman wi
light hair, light blue eyes, high aquiline features, and
haughty air. She wore a rich gray moire antique, and
fine lace cap.

Behind them came the two young lady sisters, so like the
mother that no one could have mistaken them. They wo
white muslin dresses, sashes of blue ribbon, and wreaths
blue harebells. They advanced with smiles intended to
gracious, but which were only condescending.

The eyes of all the people in the barn were fixed upon th

party, except those of Nora Worth, which were riveted upon the young heir.

And this was destiny!

There was nothing unmaidenly in her regard. She looked upon him as a peasant girl might look upon a passing prince—as something grand, glorious, sunlike, and immeasurably above her sphere; but not as a human being, not as a young man precisely like other young men.

While thus, with fresh lips glowingly apart, and blushing cheeks, and eyes full of innocent admiration, she gazed upon him, he suddenly turned around, and their eyes met full. He smiled sweetly, bowed lowly, and turned slowly away. And she, with childlike delight, seized her sister's arm and exclaimed:

"Oh, Hannah, the young heir bowed to me, he did indeed!"

"He could do no less, since you looked at him so hard," replied the sister gravely.

"But to me, Hannah, to me—just think of it! No one ever bowed to me before, not even the negroes! and to think of him—Mr. Brudenell—bowing to me—me!"

"I tell you he could do no less; he caught you looking at him; to have continued staring you in the face would have been rude; to have turned abruptly away would have been equally so; gentlemen are never guilty of rudeness, and Mr. Brudenell is a gentleman; therefore he bowed to you, as I believe he would have bowed to a colored girl even."

"Oh, but he smiled! he smiled so warmly and brightly, just for all the world like the sun shining out, and as if, as if—"

"As if what, you little goose?"

"Well, then, as if he was pleased."

"It was because he was amused; he was laughing at you, you silly child!"

"Do you think so?" asked Nora, with a sudden change of tone from gay to grave.

"I am quite sure of it, dear," replied the elder sister, speaking her real opinion.

"Laughing at me," repeated Nora to herself, and she fell into thought.

Meanwhile, with a nod to one a smile to another and a word to a third, the young heir and his party passed down the whole length of the room, and retired through an upper door. As soon as they were gone the negro fiddlers, six in number, led by Jovial, entered, took their seats, tuned their instruments, and struck up a lively reel.

There was an immediate stir; the rustic beaus sought their belles, and sets were quickly formed.

A long, lanky, stooping young man, with a pale, care-worn face and grayish hair, and dressed in a homespun jacket and trousers, came up to the sisters.

"Dance, Hannah?" he inquired.

"No, thank you, Reuben; take Nora out—she would like to."

"Dance, Nora?" said Reuben Gray, turning obediently to the younger sister.

"Set you up with it, after asking Hannah first, right before my very eyes. I'm not a-going to take anybody's cast-offs Mr. Reuben!"

"I hope you are not angry with me for that, Nora? It was natural I should prefer to dance with your sister. I belong to her like, you know. Don't be mad with me," said Reuben meekly.

"Nonsense, Rue! you know I was joking. Make Hannah dance; it will do her good; she mopes too much," laughed Nora.

"Do, Hannah, do, dear; you know I can't enjoy myself otherways," said the docile fellow.

"And it is little enjoyment you have in this world, poor soul!" said Hannah Worth, as she rose and placed her hand in his.

"Ah, but I have a great deal, Hannah, dear, when I'm along o' you," he whispered gallantly, as he led her off to join the dancers.

And they were soon seen tritting, whirling, heying, and selling with the best of them—forgetting in the contagious merriment of the music and motion all their cares.

Nora was besieged with admirers, who solicited her hand for the dance. But to one and all she returned a negative. She was tired with her long walk, and would not dance, at least not this set; she preferred to sit still and watch the others. So at last she was left to her chosen occupation. She had sat thus but a few moments, her eyes lovingly following the flying forms of Reuben and Hannah through the mazes of the dance, her heart rejoicing in their joy, when a soft voice murmured at her ear.

"Sitting quite alone, Nora? How is that? The young men have not lost their wits, I hope?"

She started, looked up, and with a vivid blush recognized her young landlord. He was bending over her with the same sweet ingenuous smile that had greeted her when their eyes

first met that morning. She drooped the long, dark lashes over her eyes until they swept her carmine cheeks, but she did not answer.

"I have just deposited my mother and sisters in their drawing-room, and I have returned to look at the dancers. May I take this seat left vacant by your sister?" he asked.

"Certainly you may, sir," she faltered forth, trembling with a vague delight.

"How much they enjoy themselves—do they not?" he asked, as he took the seat and looked upon the dancers with a benevolent delight that irradiated his fair, youthful countenance.

"Oh, indeed they do, sir," said Nora, unconsciously speaking more from her own personal experience of present happiness than from her observation of others.

"I wish I could arrive at my majority every few weeks, or else have some other good excuse for giving a great feast. I do so love to see people happy, Nora. It is the greatest pleasure I have in the world."

"Yet you must have a great many other pleasures, sir; all wealthy people must," said Nora, gaining courage to converse with one so amiable as she found her young landlord.

"Yes, I have many others; but the greatest of all is the happiness of making others happy. But why are you not among these dancers, Nora?"

"I was tired with my long walk up and down hill and dale. So I would not join them this set."

"Are you engaged for the next?"

"No, sir."

"Then be my partner for it, will you?"

"Oh, sir!" And the girl's truthful face flashed with surprise and delight.

"Will you dance with me, then, for the next set?"

"Yes, sir, please."

"Thank you, Nora. But now tell me, did you recollect me as well as I remembered you?"

"No, sir."

"But that is strange; for I knew you again the instant I saw you."

"But, sir, you know I was but a baby when you went away?"

"That is true."

"But how, then, did you know me again?" she wonderingly inquired.

"Easily enough. Though you have grown up into such a

fine young woman, your face has not changed its character, Nora. You have the same broad, fair forehead and arched brows; the same dark gray eyes and long lashes; the same delicate nose and budding mouth; and the same peculiar way of smiling only with your eyes; in a word—but pardon me, Nora, I forgot myself in speaking to you so plainly. Here is a new set forming already. Your sister and her partner are going to dance together again; shall we join them?" he suddenly inquired, upon seeing that his direct praise, in which he had spoken in ingenuous frankness, had brought the blushes again to Nora's cheeks.

She arose and gave him her hand, and he led her forth to the head of the set that was now forming, where she stood with downcast and blushing face, admired by all the men, and envied by all the women that were present.

This was not the only time he danced with her. He was cordial to all guests, but he devoted himself to Nora. This exclusive attention of the young heir to the poor maiden gave anxiety to her sister and offense to all the other women.

"No good will come of it," said one.

"No good ever does come of a rich young man paying attention to a poor girl," added another.

"He is making a perfect fool of himself," said a third indignantly.

"He is making a perfect fool of her, you had better say," amended a fourth, more malignant than the rest.

"Hannah, I don't like it! I'm a sort of elder brother-in-law to her, you know, and I don't like it. Just see how he looks at her, Hannah! Why, if I was to melt down my heart and pour it all into my face, I couldn't look at you that-a-way, Hannah, true as I love you. Why, he's just eating of her up with his eyes, and as for her, she looks as if it was pleasant to be swallowed by him!" said honest Reuben Gray, as he watched the ill-matched young pair as they sat absorbed in each other's society in a remote corner of the barn.

"Nor do I like it, Reuben," sighed Hannah.

"I've a great mind to interfere! I've a right to! I'm her brother-in-law to be."

"No, do not, Reuben; it would do more harm than good; it would make her and everybody else think more seriously of these attentions than they deserve. It is only for to-night, you know. After this, they will scarcely ever meet to speak to each other again."

"As you please, Hannah, you are wiser than I am; but still, dear, I must say that a great deal of harm may be done

in a day. Remember, dear, that (though I don't call it harm, but the greatest blessing of my life) it was at a corn-shucking, where we met for the fust time, that you and I fell in love long of each other, and have we ever fell out of it yet? No, Hannah, nor never will. But as you and I are both poor, and faithful, and patient, and broken in like to bear things cheerful, no harm has come of our falling in love at that corn-shucking. But now, s'pose them there children fall in love long of each other by looking into each other's pretty eyes—who's to hinder it? And that will be the end of it? He can't marry her; that's impossible; a man of his rank and a girl of hers! his mother and sisters would never let him! and if they would, his own pride wouldn't! And so he'd go away and try to forget her, and she'd stop home and break her heart. Hannah, love is like a fire, easy to put out in the beginning, unpossible at the end. You just better let me go and heave a bucket of water on to that there love while it is a-kindling and before the blaze breaks out."

"Go then, good Reuben, and tell Nora that I am going home and wish her to come to me at once."

Reuben arose to obey, but was interrupted by the appearance of a negro footman from the house, who came up to him and said:

"Mr. Reuben, de mistess say will you say to de young marster how de gemmen an' ladies is all arrive, an' de dinner will be sarve in ten minutes, an' how she 'sires his presence at de house immediate."

"Certainly, John! This is better, Hannah, than my interference would have been," said Reuben Gray, as he hurried off to execute his mission.

So completely absorbed in each other's conversation were the young pair that they did not observe Reuben's approach until he stood before them, and, touching his forehead, said respectfully:

"Sir, Madam Brudenell has sent word as the vis'ters be all arrived at the house, and the dinner will be ready in ten minutes, so she wishes you, if you please, to come directly."

"So late!" exclaimed the young man, looking at his watch, and starting up, "how time flies in some society! Nora, I will conduct you to your sister, and then go and welcome our guests at the house; although I had a great deal rather stay where I am," he added, in a whisper.

"If you please, sir, I can take her to Hannah," suggested Reuben.

But without paying any attention to this friendly offer, the

young man gave his hand to the maiden and led her down the whole length of the barn, followed by Reuben, and also by the envious eyes of all the assembly.

"Here she is, Hannah. I have brought her back to you quite safe, not even weary with dancing. I hope I have helped her to enjoy herself," said the young heir gayly, as he deposited the rustic beauty by the side of her sister.

"You are very kind, sir," said Hannah coldly.

"Ah, you there, Reuben! Be sure you take good care of this little girl, and see that she has plenty of pleasant partners," said the young gentleman, on seeing Gray behind.

"Be sure I shall take care of her, sir, as if she was my sister, as I hope some day she may be," replied the man.

"And be careful that she gets a good place at the supper-table—there will be a rush, you know."

"I shall see to that, sir."

"Good evening, Hannah; good evening, Nora," said the young heir, smiling and bowing as he withdrew from the sisters.

Nora sighed; it might have been from fatigue. Several country beaus approached, eagerly contending, now that the coast was clear, for the honor of the beauty's hand in the dance. But Nora refused one and all. She should dance no more this evening, she said. Supper came on, and Reuben, with one sister on each arm, led them out to the great tent where it was spread. There was a rush. The room was full and the table was crowded; but Reuben made good places for the sisters, and stood behind their chairs to wait on them. Hannah, like a happy, working, practical young woman in good health, who had earned an appetite, did ample justice to the luxuries placed before them. Nora ate next to nothing. In vain Hannah and Reuben offered everything to her in turn; she would take nothing. She was not hungry, she said; she was tired and wanted to go home.

CHAPTER III

PASSION

WHAT a contrast! the interior of that poor hut to all the splendors they had left! The sisters both were tired, and quickly undressed and went to bed, but not at once to sleep.

Hannah had the bad habit of lying awake at night, studying how to make the two ends of her income and her outlay

meet at the close of the year, just as if loss of rest ever helped on the solution to that problem!

Nora, for her part, lay awake in a disturbance of her whole nature, which she could neither understand nor subdue! Nora had never read a poem, a novel, or a play in her life; she had no knowledge of the world; and no instructress but her old maiden sister. Therefore Nora knew no more of love than does the novice who has never left her convent! She could not comprehend the reason why after meeting with Herman Brudenell she had taken such a disgust at the rustic beaus who had hitherto pleased her; nor yet why her whole soul was so very strangely troubled; why at once she was so happy and so miserable; and, above all, why she could not speak of these things to her sister Hannah. She tossed about in feverish excitement.

Early the next morning the sisters were up. The weather had changed with the usual abruptness of our capricious climate. The day before had been like June. This day was like January. A dark-gray sky overhead, with black clouds driven by an easterly wind scudding across it, and threatening a rain storm.

The sisters hurried through their morning work, got their frugal breakfast over, put their room in order, and sat down to their daily occupation—Hannah before her loom, Nora beside her spinning-wheel. The clatter of the loom, the whir of the wheel, admitted of no conversation between the workers; so Hannah worked, as usual, in perfect silence, and Nora, who ever before sung to the sound of her humming wheel, now mused instead. The wind rose in occasional gusts, shaking the little hut in its exposed position on the hill.

"How different from yesterday," sighed Nora, at length.

"Yes, dear; but such is life," said Hannah. And there the conversation ended, and only the clatter of the loom and the whir of the wheel was heard again, the sisters working on in silence. But hark! Why has the wheel suddenly stopped and the heart of Nora started to rapid beating?

A step came crashing through the crisp frost, and a hand was on the door-latch.

"It is Mr. Brudenell! What can he want here?" exclaimed Hannah, in a tone of impatience as she rose and opened the door.

The fresh, smiling, genial face of the young man met her there. His kind, cordial, cheery voice addressed her: "Good morning, Hannah! I have been down to the bay this morning, you see, bleak as it is, and the fish bite well! See this

fine rock fish! will you accept it from me? And oh, will you let me come in and thaw out my half-frozen fingers by your fire? or will you keep me standing out here in the cold?" he added, smiling.

"Walk in, sir," said Hannah, inhospitably enough, as she made way for him to enter.

He came in, wearing his picturesque fisherman's dress, carrying his fishing-rod over his right shoulder, and holding in his left hand the fine rock fish of which he had spoken. His eyes searched for and found Nora, whose face was covered with the deepest blushes.

"Good morning, Nora! I hope you enjoyed yourself yesterday. Did they take care of you after I left?" he inquired, going up to her.

"Yes, thank you, sir."

"Mr. Brudenell, will you take this chair?" said Hannah, placing one directly before the fire, and pointing to it without giving him time to speak another word to Nora.

"Thank you, yes, Hannah; and will you relieve me of this fish?"

"No, thank you, sir; I think you had better take it up to the madam," said Hannah bluntly.

"What! carry this all the way from here to Brudenell, after bringing it from the bay? Whatever are you thinking of, Hannah?" laughed the young man, as he stepped outside for a moment and hung the fish on a nail in the wall. "There it is, Hannah," he said, returning and taking his seat at the fire; "you use it or throw it away, as you like."

Hannah made no reply to this, she did not wish to encourage him either to talk or to prolong his stay. Her very expression of countenance was cold and repellent almost to rudeness. Nora saw this and sympathized with him, and blamed her sister.

"To think," she said to herself, "that he was so good to us when we went to see him; and Hannah is so rude to him, now he has come to see us! It is a shame! And see how well he bears it all, too, sitting there warming his poor white hands."

In fact, the good humor of the young man was imperturbable. He sat there, as Nora observed, smiling and spreading his hands out over the genial blaze and seeking to talk amicably with Hannah, and feeling compensated for all the rebuffs he received from the elder sister whenever he encountered a compassionate glance from the younger, although at the meeting of their eyes her glance was instantly with-

drawn and succeeded by fiery blushes. He stayed as long as he had the least excuse for doing so, and then arose to take his leave, half smiling at Hannah's inhospitable surliness and his own perseverance under difficulties. He went up to Nora to bid her good-by. He took her hand, and as he gently pressed it he looked into her eyes; but hers fell beneath his gaze; and with a simple "Good-day, Nora," he turned away.

Hannah stood holding the cottage door wide open for his exit.

"Good morning, Hannah," he said smilingly, as he passed out.

She stepped after him, saying:

"Mr. Brudenell, sir, I must beg you not to come so far out of your way again to bring us a fish. We thank you; but we could not accept it. This also I must request you to take away." And detaching the rock fish from the nail where it hung, she put it in his hands.

He laughed good-humoredly as he took it, and without further answer than a low bow walked swiftly down the hill.

Hannah re-entered the hut and found herself in the midst of a tempest in a tea-pot.

Nora had a fiery temper of her own, and now it blazed out upon her sister—her beautiful face was stormy with grief and indignation as she exclaimed:

"Oh, Hannah! how could you act so shamefully? To think that yesterday you and I ate and drank and feasted and danced all day at his place, and received so much kindness and attention from him besides, and to-day you would scarcely let him sit down and warm his feet in ours! You treated him worse than a dog, you did, Hannah. And he felt it, too. I saw he did, though he was too much of a gentleman to show it! And as for me, I could have died from mortification!"

"My child," answered Hannah, gravely, "however badly you or he might have felt, believe me, I felt the worse of the three, to be obliged to take the course I did."

"He will never come here again, never!" sobbed Nora, scarcely heeding the reply of her sister.

"I hope to Heaven he never may!" said Hannah, as she resumed her seat at her loom and drove the shuttle "fast and furious" from side to side of her cloth.

But he did come again. Despite the predictions of Nora and the prayers of Hannah and the inclemency of the weather.

The next day was a tempestuous one, with rain, snow, hail, and sleet all driven before a keen northeast wind, and the

sisters, with a great roaring fire in the fireplace between them, were seated the one at her loom and the other at her spinning-wheel, when there came a rap at the door, and before anyone could possibly have had time to go to it, it was pushed open, and Herman Brudenell, covered with snow and sleet, rushed quickly in.

"For Heaven's sake, my dear Hannah, give me shelter from the storm! I couldn't wait for ceremony, you see! I had to rush right in after knocking! pardon me! Was ever such a climate as this of ours! What a day for the seventeenth of April! It ought to be bottled up and sent abroad as a curiosity!" he exclaimed, all in a breath, as he unceremoniously took off his cloak and shook it and threw it over a chair.

"Mr. Brudenell! You here again! What could have brought you out on such a day?" cried Hannah, starting up from her loom in extreme surprise.

"The spirit of restlessness, Hannah! It is so dull up there, and particularly on a dull day! How do you do, Nora? Blooming as a rose, eh?" he said, suddenly breaking off and going to shake hands with the blushing girl.

"Never mind Nora's roses, Mr. Brudenell; attend to me; I ask did you expect to find it any livelier here in this poor hut than in your own princely halls?" said Hannah, as she placed a chair before the fire for his accommodation.

"A great deal livelier, Hannah," he replied, with boyish frankness, as he took his seat and spread out his hands before the cheerful blaze. "No end to the livelier. Why, Hannah, it is always lively where there's nature, and always dull where there's not! Up yonder now there's too much art; high art indeed—but still art! From my mother and sisters all nature seems to have been educated, refined, and polished away. There we all sat this morning in the parlor, the young ladies punching holes in pieces of muslin, to sew them up again, and calling the work embroidery; and there was my mother, actually working a blue lamb on red grass, and calling her employment worsted work. There was no talk but of patterns, no fire but what was shut up close in a horrid radiator. Really, out of doors was more inviting than in. I thought I would just throw on my cloak and walk over here to see how you were getting along this cold weather, and what do I find here? A great open blazing wood-fire—warm, fragrant, and cheerful as only a fire can be! and a humming wheel and a dancing loom, two cheerful girls looking bright as two chirping birds in their nest! This is like a nest!

and it is worth the walk to find it. You'll not turn me out for an hour or so, Hannah?"

There was scarcely any such thing as resisting his gay, frank, boyish appeal; yet Hannah answered coldly:

"Certainly not, Mr. Brudenell, though I fancy you might have found more attractive company elsewhere. There can be little amusement for you in sitting there and listening to the flying shuttle or the whirling wheel, for hours together, pleasant as you might have first thought them."

"Yes, but it will! I shall hear music in the loom and wheel, and see pictures in the fire," said the young man, settling himself, comfortable.

Hannah drove her shuttle back and forth with a vigor that seemed to owe something to temper.

Herman heard the music and saw no pictures; his whole nature was absorbed in the one delightful feeling of being near Nora, only being near her, that was sufficient for the present to make him happy. To talk to her was impossible, even if he had greatly desired to do so; for the music of which he had spoken made too much noise. He stayed as long as he possibly could, and then reluctantly arose to leave. He shook hands with Hannah first, reserving the dear delight of pressing Nora's hand for the last.

The next day the weather changed again; it was fine; and Herman Brudenell, as usual, presented himself at the hut; his excuse this time being that he wished to inquire whether the sisters would not like to have some repairs put upon the house—a new roof, another door and window, or even a new room added; if so, his carpenter was even now at Brudenell Hall, attending to some improvements there, and as soon as he was done he should be sent to the hut.

But no; Hannah wanted no repairs whatever. The hut was large enough for her and her sister, only too small to entertain visitors. So with this pointed home-thrust from Hannah, and a glance that at once healed the wound from Nora, he was forced to take his departure.

The next day he called again; he had, unluckily, left his gloves behind him during his preceding visit.

They were very nearly flung at his head by the thoroughly exasperated Hannah. But again he was made happy by a glance from Nora.

And, in short, almost every day he found some excuse for coming to the cottage, overlooking all Hannah's rude rebuffs with the most imperturbable good humor. At all these visits Hannah was present. She never left the house for an instant,

even when upon one occasion she saw the cows in her garden, eating up all the young peas and beans. She let the garden be utterly destroyed rather than leave Nora to hear words of love that for her could mean nothing but misery. This went on for some weeks, when Hannah was driven to decisive measures by an unexpected event. Early one morning Hannah went to a village called "Baymouth," to procure coffee, tea, and sugar. She went there, did her errand, and returned to the hut as quickly as she possibly could. As she suddenly opened the door she was struck with consternation by seeing the wheel idle and Nora and Herman seated close together, conversing in a low, confidential tone. They started up on seeing her, confusion on their faces.

Hannah was thoroughly self-possessed. Putting her parcels in Nora's hands, she said:

"Empty these in their boxes, dear, while I speak to Mr Brudenell." Then turning to the young man, she said: "Sir your mother, I believe, has asked to see me about some cloth she wishes to have woven. I am going over to her now; will you go with me?"

"Certainly, Hannah," replied Mr. Brudenell, seizing his hat in nervous trepidation, and forgetting or not venturing to bid good-by to Nora.

When they had got a little way from the hut, Hannah said

"Mr. Brudenell, why do you come to our poor little house so often?"

The question, though it was expected, was perplexing.

"Why do I come, Hannah? Why, because I like to."

"Because you like to! Quite a sufficient reason for a gentleman to render for his actions, I suppose you think. But now, another question: 'What are your intentions towards my sister?'"

"My intentions!" repeated the young man, in a thunderder-struck manner. "What in the world do you mean, Hannah?"

"I mean to remind you that you have been visiting Nora for the last two months, and that to-day, when I entered the house, I found you sitting together as lovers sit; looking at each other as lovers look; and speaking in low tones that lovers use; and when I reached you, you started in confusion —as lovers do when discovered at their love-making. Now I repeat my question, 'What are your intentions towards Nora Worth?'"

Herman Brudenell was blushing now, if he had never blushed before; his very brow was crimson. Hannah had to

reiterate her question before his hesitating tongue could answer it.

"My intentions, Hannah? Nothing wrong, I do swear to you! Heaven knows, I mean no harm."

"I believe that, Mr. Brudenell! I have always believed it, else be sure that I should have found means to compel your absence. But though you might have meant no harm, did you mean any good, Mr. Brudenell?"

"Hannah, I fear that I meant nothing but to enjoy the great pleasure I derived from—from—Nora's society, and—"

"Stop there, Mr. Brudenell; do not add—mine; for that would be an insincerity unworthy of you! Of me you did not think, except as a marplot! You say you came for the great pleasure you enjoyed in Nora's society! Did it ever occur to you that she might learn to take too much pleasure in yours? Answer me truly."

"Hannah, yes, I believed that she was very happy in my company."

"In a word, you like her, and you knew you were winning her liking! And yet you had no intentions of any sort, you say; you meant nothing, you admit, but to enjoy yourself! Now, Mr. Brudenell, do you think it a manly part for a gentleman to seek to win a poor girl's love merely for his pastime?"

"Hannah, you are severe on me! Heaven knows I have never spoken one word of love to Nora."

"'Never spoken one word!' What of that? What need of words? Are not glances, are not tones, far more eloquent than words? With these glances and tones you have a thousand times assured my young sister that you love her, that you adore her, that you worship her!"

"Hannah, if my eyes spoke this language to Nora, they spoke Heaven's own truth! There! I have told you more than I ever told her, for to her my eyes only have spoken!" said the young man fervently.

"Of what were you talking with your heads so close together this morning?" asked Hannah abruptly.

"How do I know? Of birds, of flowers, moonshine, or some such rubbish. I was not heeding my words."

"No, your eyes were too busy! And now, Mr. Brudenell, I repeat my question: Was yours a manly part—discoursing all this love to Nora, and having no ultimate intentions?"

"Hannah, I never questioned my conscience upon that point; I was too happy for such cross-examination."

"But now the question is forced upon you, Mr. Brudenell, and we must have an answer now and here."

"Then, Hannah, I will answer truly! I love Nora; and if I were free to marry, I would make her my wife to-morrow; but I am not; therefore I have been wrong, and very wrong, to seek her society. I acted, however, from want of thought, not from want of principle; I hope you will believe that, Hannah."

"I do believe it, Mr. Brudenell."

"And now I put myself in your hands, Hannah! Direct me as you think best; I will obey you. What shall I do?"

"See Nora no more; from this day absent yourself from our house."

He turned pale as death, reeled, and supported himself against the trunk of a friendly tree.

Hannah looked at him, and from the bottom of her heart she pitied him; for she knew what love was—loving Reuben!

"Mr. Brudenell," she said, "do not take this to heart so much; why should you, indeed, when you know that your fate is in your own hands? You are master of your own destiny, and no man who is so should give way to despondency. The alternative before you is simply this: to cease to visit Nora, or to marry her. To do the first you must sacrifice your love; to do the last you must sacrifice your pride. Now choose between the courses of action! Gratify your love or your pride, as you see fit, and cheerfully pay down the price! This seems to me to be the only manly, the only rational, course."

"Oh, Hannah, Hannah, you do not understand! you do not!" he cried in a voice full of anguish.

"Yes, I do; I know how hard it would be to you in either case. On the one hand, what a cruel wrench it will give your heart to tear yourself from Nora—"

"Yes, yes; oh, Heaven, yes!"

"And, on the other hand, I know what an awful sacrifice you would make in marrying her—"

"It is not that! Oh, do me justice! I should not think it a sacrifice! She is too good for me! Oh, Hannah, it is not that which hinders!"

"It is the thought of your mother and sisters, perhaps; but surely if they love you, as I am certain they do, and if they see your happiness depends upon this marriage—in time they will yield!"

"It is not my family either, Hannah! Do you think that

I would sacrifice my peace—or hers—to the unreasonable pride of my family? No, Hannah, no!"

"Then what is it? What stands in the way of your offering your hand to her to whom you have given your heart?"

"Hannah, I cannot tell you! Oh, Hannah, I feel that I have been very wrong, criminal even! But I acted blindly; you have opened my eyes, and now I see I must visit your house no more; how much it costs me to say this—to do this—you can never know!"

He wiped the perspiration from his pale brow, and, after a few moments given to the effort of composing himself, he asked:

"Shall we go on now?"

She nodded assent and they walked onward.

"Hannah," he said, as they went along, "I have one deplorable weakness."

She looked up suddenly, fearing to hear the confession of some fatal vice.

He continued:

"It is the propensity to please others, whether by doing so I act well or ill!"

"Mr. Brudenell!" exclaimed Hannah, in a shocked voice.

"Yes, the pain I feel in seeing others suffer, the delight I have in seeing them enjoy, often leads—leads me to sacrifice not only my own personal interests, but the principles of truth and justice!"

"Oh, Mr. Brudenell!"

"It is so, Hannah! And one signal instance of such a sacrifice at once of myself and of the right has loaded my life with endless regret! However, I am ungenerous to say this; for a gift once given, even if it is of that which one holds most precious in the world, should be forgotten or at least not be grudged by the giver! Ah, Hannah—" He stopped abruptly.

"Mr. Brudenell, you will excuse me for saying that I agree with you in your reproach of yourself. That trait of which you speak is a weakness which should be cured. I am but a poor country girl. But I have seen enough to know that sensitive and sympathizing natures like your own are always at the mercy of all around them. The honest and the generous take no advantage of such; but the selfish and the calculating make a prey of them! You call this weakness a propensity to please others! Mr. Brudenell, seek to please the Lord and He will give you strength to resist the spoilers," said Hannah gravely.

"Too late, too late, at least as far as this life is concerned, for I am ruined, Hannah!"

"Ruined! Mr. Brudenell!"

"Ruined, Hannah!"

"Good Heaven! I hope you have not endorsed for anyone to the whole extent of your fortune?"

"Ha, ha, ha! You make me laugh, Hannah! laugh in the very face of ruin, to think that you should consider loss of fortune a subject of such eternal regret as I told you my life was loaded with!"

"Oh, Mr. Brudenell, I have known you from childhood! I hope, I hope you haven't gambled or—"

"Thank Heaven, no, Hannah! I have never gambled, nor drunk, nor—in fact, done anything of the sort!"

"You have not indorsed for anyone, nor gambled, nor drunk, nor anything of that sort, and yet you are ruined!"

"Ruined and wretched, Hannah! I do not exaggerate in saying so!"

"And yet you look so happy!"

"Grasses grow and flowers bloom above burning volcanoes Hannah."

"Ah, Mr. Brudenell, what is the nature of this ruin then? Tell me! I am your sincere friend, and I am older than you; perhaps I could counsel you."

"It is past counsel, Hannah."

"What is it then?"

"I cannot tell you except this! that the fatality of which I speak is the only reason why I do not overstep the boundary of conventional rank and marry Nora! Why I do not marry anybody! Hush! here we are at the house."

Very stately and beautiful looked the mansion with its walls of white free-stone and its porticoes of white marble gleaming through its groves upon the top of the hill.

When they reached it Hannah turned to go around to the servants' door, but Mr. Brudenell called to her, saying:

"This way! this way, Hannah!" and conducted her up the marble steps to the visitors' entrance.

He preceded her into the drawing-room, a spacious apartment now in its simple summer dress of straw matting, linen covers, and lace curtains.

Mrs. Brudenell and the two young ladies, all in white muslin morning dresses, were gathered around a marble table in the recess of the back bay window, looking over newspapers.

On seeing the visitor who accompanied her son, Mrs. Brudenell arose with a look of haughty surprise.

"You wished to see Hannah Worth, I believe, mother, and here she is," said Herman.

"My housekeeper did. Touch the bell, if you please, Herman."

Mr. Brudenell did as requested, and the summons was answered by Jovial.

"Take this woman to Mrs. Spicer, and say that she has come about the weaving. When she leaves show her where the servants' door is, so that she may know where to find it when she comes again," said Mrs. Brudenell haughtily. As soon as Hannah had left the room Herman said:

"Mother, you need not have hurt that poor girl's feelings by speaking so before her."

"She need not have exposed herself to rebuke by entering where she did."

"Mother, she entered with me. I brought her in."

"Then you were very wrong. These people, like all of their class, require to be kept down—repressed."

"Mother, this is a republic!"

"Yes; and it is ten times more necessary to keep the lower orders down, in a republic like this, where they are always trying to rise, than it is in a monarchy, where they always keep their place," said the lady arrogantly.

"What have you there?" inquired Herman, with a view of changing the disagreeable subject.

"The English papers. The foreign mail is in. And, by the way, here is a letter for you."

Herman received the letter from her hand, changed color as he looked at the writing on the envelope, and walked away to the front window to read it alone.

His mother's watchful eyes followed him.

As he read, his face flushed and paled; his eyes flashed and smoldered; sighs and moans escaped his lips. At length, softly crumpling up the letter, he thrust it into his pocket, and was stealing from the room to conceal his agitation, when his mother, who had seen it all, spoke:

"Any bad news, Herman?"

"No, madam," he promptly answered.

"What is the matter, then?"

He hesitated, and answered:

"Nothing."

"Who is that letter from?"

"A correspondent," he replied, escaping from the room.

"Humph! I might have surmised that much," laughed the lady, with angry scorn.

But he was out of hearing.

"Did you notice the handwriting on the envelope of that letter, Elizabeth?" she inquired of her elder daughter.

"Which letter, mamma?"

"That one for your brother, of course."

"No, mamma, I did not look at it."

"You never look at anything but your stupid worsted work. You will be an old maid, Elizabeth. Did you notice it, Elinor?"

"Yes, mamma. The superscription was in a very delicate feminine handwriting; and the seal was a wounded falcon, drawing the arrow from its own breast—surmounted by an earl's coronet."

"'Tis the seal of the Countess of Hurstmonceaux."

CHAPTER IV

THE FATAL DEED

HANNAH WORTH walked home, laden like a beast of burden, with an enormous bag of hanked yarn on her back. She entered her hut, dropped the burden on the floor, and stopped to take breath.

"I think they might have sent a negro man to bring that for you, Hannah," said Nora, pausing in her spinning.

"As if they would do that!" panted Hannah.

Not a word was said upon the subject of Herman Brudenell's morning visit. Hannah forebore to allude to it from pity; Nora from modesty.

Hannah sat down to rest, and Nora got up to prepare their simple afternoon meal.

The evening passed much as usual; but the next morning as the sisters were at work, Hannah putting the warp for Mrs. Brudenell's new web of cloth in the loom, and Nora spinning, the elder noticed that the younger often paused in her work and glanced uneasily from the window. Ah, too well Hannah understood the meaning of those involuntary glances. Nora was "watching for the steps that came no back again!"

Hannah felt sorry for her sister; but she said to herself:

"Never mind, she will be all right in a few days. She will forget him."

This did not happen so, however. As day followed day, and Herman Brudenell failed to appear, Nora Worth grew more uneasy, expectant, and anxious. Ah! who can estimate the real heart-sickness of "hope deferred!" Every morning she said to herself: "He will surely come to-day!" Every day each sense of hearing and of seeing was on the qui vive to catch the first sound or the first sight of his approach. Every night she went to bed to weep in silent sorrow.

All other sorrows may be shared and lightened by sympathy except that of a young girl's disappointment in love. With that no one intermeddles with impunity. To notice it is to distress her; to speak of it is to insult her; even her sister must in silence respect it; as the expiring love folds her wing over her mortal wound, so does the maiden jealously conceal her grief and die. Days grew into weeks, and Herman did not come. And still Nora watched and listened as she spun—every nerve strained to its utmost tension in vigilance and expectancy. Human nature—especially a girl's nature—cannot bear such a trial for any long time together. Nora's health began to fail; first she lost her spirits, and then her appetite, and finally her sleep. She grew pale, thin, and nervous.

Hannah's heart ached for her sister.

"This will never do," she said; "suspense is killing her. I must end it."

So one morning while they were at work as usual, and Nora's hand was pausing on her spindle, and her eyes were fixed upon the narrow path leading through the Forest Valley, Hannah spoke:

"It will not do, dear; he is not coming! he will never come again; and since he cannot be anything to you, he ought not to come!"

"Oh, Hannah, I know it; but it is killing me!"

These words were surprised from the poor girl; for the very next instant her waxen cheeks, brow, neck, and very ears kindled up into fiery blushes, and hiding her face in her hands she sank down in her chair overwhelmed.

Hannah watched, and then went to her, and began to caress her, saying:

"Nora, Nora, dear; Nora, love; Nora, my own darling, look up!"

"Don't speak to me; I am glad he does not come; never mention his name to me again, Hannah," said the stricken girl, in a low, peremptory whisper.

Hannah felt that this order must be obeyed, and so she went back to her loom and worked on in silence.

After a few minutes Nora arose and resumed her spinning, and for some time the wheel whirled briskly and merrily around. But towards the middle of the day it began to turn slowly and still more slowly.

At length it stopped entirely, and the spinner said:

"Hannah, I feel very tired; would you mind if I should lay down a little while?"

"No, certainly not, my darling. Are your poorly, Nora?"

"No, I am quite well, only tired," replied the girl, as she threw herself upon the bed.

One day about this time Reuben Gray called to see Hannah Reuben was one of the most discreet of lovers, never venturing to visit his beloved more than once in each month.

"Look at Nora!" said Hannah, in a heart-broken tone, as she pointed to her sister, who was sitting at her wheel, no spinning, but gazing from the window down the narrow foot path, and apparently lost in mournful reverie.

"I'll go and fetch a medical man," said Reuben, and he left the hut for that purpose.

But distances from house to house in that sparsely settled neighborhood were great, and doctors were few and could no be had the moment they were called for. So it was not until the next day that Doctor Potts, the round-bodied little medical attendant of the neighborhood, made his apearance at the hut.

He was welcomed by Hannah, who introduced him to her sister.

Nora received his visit with a great deal of nervous irritability, declaring that nothing at all ailed her, only that she was tired.

"Tired," repeated the doctor, as he felt her pulse and watched her countenance. "Yes, tired of living! a serious fatigue this, Hannah. Her malady is more on the mind than the body! You must try to rouse her, take her into company keep her amused. If you were able to travel, I should recommend change of scene; but of course that is out of the question. However, give her this, according to the directions I will call in again to see her in a few days." And so saying the doctor left a bottle of medicine and took his departure.

That day the doctor had to make a professional visit of inspection to the negro quarters at Brudenell Hall; so he mounted his fat little white cob and trotted down the hill in the direction of the valley.

When he arrived at Brudenell Hall he was met by Mrs. Brudenell, who said to him:

"Dr. Potts, I wish before you leave, you would see my son. I am seriously anxious about his health. He objects to my sending for you; but now that you are here on a visit to the quarters, perhaps his objections may give way."

"Very well, madam; but since he does not wish to be attended, perhaps he had better not know that my visit is to him; I will just make you a call as usual."

"Join us at lunch, doctor, and you can observe him at your leisure."

"Thank you, madam. What seems the matter with Mr. Brudenell?"

"A general failure without any particular disease. If it were not that I know better, I would say that something lay heavily upon his mind."

"Humph! a second case of that kind to-day! Well, madam, I will join you at two o'clock," said the doctor, as he trotted off towards the negro quarters.

Punctually at the hour the doctor presented himself at the luncheon table of Mrs. Brudenell. There were present Mrs. Brudenell, her two daughters, her son, and a tall, dark, distinguished looking man, whom the lady named as Colonel Mervin.

The doctor watched Herman Brudenell. He was indeed changed. He looked ill, yet he ate, drank, laughed, and talked with the best there. But when his eye met that of the doctor fixed upon him, it flashed with a threatening glance that seemed to repel scrutiny.

The doctor, to turn the attention of the lady from her son, said:

"I was at the hut on the hill to-day. One of those poor girls, the youngest, Nora, I think they call her, is in a bad way. She seems to me to be sinking into decline." As he said this he happened to glance at Herman Brudenell. That gentleman's eyes were fixed upon his with a gaze of wild alarm, but they sank as soon as noticed.

"Poor creatures! that class of people scarcely ever get enough to eat or drink, and thus so many of them die of decline brought on from insufficiency of nourishment. I will send a bag of flour up to the hut to-morrow," said Mrs. Brudenell complacently.

Soon after they had arisen from the table.

The little doctor offered his arm to Mrs. Brudenell, and as

they walked to the drawing-room he found an opportunity of saying to her:

"It is, I think, as you surmised. There is something on his mind. Try to find out what it is. That is my advice. It is of no use to tease him with medical attendance."

When they reached the drawing-room they found the boy with the mail bag waiting for his mistress. She quickly unlocked and distributed its contents.

"Letters for everybody except myself! But here is a late copy of the 'London Times' with which I can amuse myself while you look over your epistles, ladies and gentlemen," said Mrs. Brudenell, as she settled herself to the perusal of her paper. She skipped the leader, read the court circular, and was deep in the column of causalties, when she suddenly cried out:

"Good Heaven, Herman! what a catastrophe!"

"What is it mother?"

"A collision on the London and Brighton Railway, and ever so many killed or wounded, and— Gracious goodness!"

"What, mother?"

"Among those instantly killed are the Marquis and Marchioness of Brambleton and the Countess of Hurstmonceaux!"

"No!" cried the young man, rushing across the room, snatching the paper from his mother's hand, and with starting eyes fixed upon the paragraph that she hastily pointed out, seeming to devour the words.

A few days after this Nora Worth sat propped up in an easy-chair by the open window that commanded the view of the Forest Valley and of the opposite hill crowned with the splendid mansion of Brudenell Hall.

But Nora was not looking upon this view; at least except upon a very small part of it—namely, the little narrow foot-path that led down her own hill and was lost in the shade of the valley. The doctor's prescriptions had done Nora no good; how should they? Could he, more than others, "minister to a mind diseased?" In a word, she had now grown so weak that the spinning was entirely set aside, and she passed her days propped up in the easy-chair beside the window, through which she could watch the little path, which was now indeed so disused, so neglected and grass grown, as to be almost obliterated.

Suddenly, while Nora's eyes were fixed abstractedly upon this path, she uttered a great cry and started to her feet.

Hannah stopped the clatter of her shuttle to see what was the matter.

Nora was leaning from the window, gazing breathlessly down the path.

"What is it, Nora, my dear? Don't lean so far out; you will fall! What is it?"

"Oh, Hannah, he is coming! he is coming!"

"Who is coming, my darling? I see no one!" said the elder sister, straining her eyes down the path.

"But I feel him coming! He is coming fast! He will be in sight presently! There! what did I tell you? There he is!"

And truly at that moment Herman Brudenell advanced from the thicket and walked rapidly up the path towards the hut.

Nora sank back in her seat, overcome, almost fainting.

Another moment and Herman Brudenell was in the room, clasping her form, and sobbing:

"Nora! Nora, my beloved! my beautiful! you have been ill and I knew it not! dying, and I knew it not! Oh! oh! oh!"

"Yes, but I am well, now that you are here!" gasped the girl, as she thrilled and trembled with returning life. But the moment this confession had been surprised from her she blushed fiery red to the very tips of her ears and hid her face in the pillows of her chair.

"My darling girl! My own blessed girl! do not turn your face away! look at me with your sweet eyes! See, I am here at your side, telling you how deep my own sorrow had been at the separation from you, and how much deeper at the thought that you also have suffered! Look at me! Smile on me! Speak to me, beloved! I am your own!"

These and many other wild, tender, pleading words of love he breathed in the ear of the listening, blushing, happy girl; both quite heedless of the presence of Hannah, who stood petrified with consternation.

At length, however, by the time Herman had seated himself beside Nora, Hannah recovered her presence of mind and power of motion; and she went to him and said:

"Mr. Brudenell! Is this well? Could you not leave her in peace?"

No, I could not leave her! Yes, it is well, Hannah! The burden I spoke of is unexpectedly lifted from my life! I am a restored man. And I have come here to-day to ask Nora, in your presence, and with your consent, to be my wife!"

"And with your mother's consent, Mr. Brudenell?"

"Hannah, that was unkind of you to throw a damper upon my joy. And look at me, I have not been in such robust health myself since you drove me away!"

As he said this, Nora's hand, which he held, closed convulsively on his, and she murmured under her breath:

"Have you been ill? You are not pale!"

"No, love, I was only sad at our long separation; now you see I am flushed with joy; for now I shall see you every day!" he replied, lifting her hand to his lips.

Hannah was dreadfully disturbed. She was delighted to see life, and light, and color flowing back to her sister's face; but she was dismayed at the very cause of this—the presence of Herman Brudenell. The instincts of her affections and the sense of her duties were at war in her bosom. The latter as yet was in the ascendancy. It was under its influence she spoke again.

"But, Mr. Brudenell, your mother?"

"Hannah! Hannah! don't be disagreeable! You are too young to play duenna yet!" he said gayly.

"I do not know what you mean by duenna, Mr. Brudenell, but I know what is due to your mother," replied the elder sister gravely.

"Mother, mother, mother; how tiresome you are, Hannah, everlastingly repeating the same word over and over again! You shall not make us miserable. We intend to be happy, now, Nora and myself. Do we not, dearest?" he added, changing the testy tone in which he had spoken to the elder sister for one of the deepest tenderness as he turned and addressed the younger.

"Yes, but, your mother," murmured Nora very softly and timidly.

"You too! Decidedly that word is infectious, like yawning! Well, my dears, since you will bring it on the tapis, let us discuss and dismiss it. My mother is a fine woman, Hannah; but she is unreasonable, Nora. She is attached to what she calls her 'order,' my dears, and never would consent to my marriage with any other than a lady of rank and wealth."

"Then you must give up Nora, Mr. Brudenell," said Hannah gravely.

"Yes, indeed," assented poor Nora, under her breath, and turning pale.

"May the Lord give me up if I do!" cried the young man impetuously.

"You will never defy your mother," said Hannah.

"Oh, no! oh, no! I should be frightened to death," gasped Nora, trembling between weakness and fear.

"No, I will never defy my mother; there are other ways of doing things; I must marry Nora, and we must keep the affair quiet for a time."

"I do not understand you," said Hannah coldly.

"Nora does, though! Do you not, my darling?" exclaimed Herman triumphantly.

And the blushing but joyous face of Nora answered him.

"You say you will not defy your mother. Do you mean then to deceive her, Mr. Brudenell?" inquired the elder sister severely.

"Hannah, don't be abusive! This is just the whole matter, in brief. I am twenty-one, master of myself and my estate. I could marry Nora at any time, openly, without my mother's consent. But that would give her great pain. It would not kill her, nor make her ill, but it would wound her in her tenderest points—her love of her son, and her love of rank; it would produce an open rupture between us. She would never forgive me, nor acknowledge my wife."

"Then why do you speak at all of marrying Nora?" interrupted Hannah angrily.

Herman turned and looked at Nora. That mute look was his only answer, and it was eloquent; it said plainly what his lips forbore to speak: "I have won her love, and I ought to marry her; for if I do not, she will die."

Then he continued as if Hannah had not interrupted him:

"I wish to get on as easily as I can between these conflicting difficulties. I will not wrong Nora, and I will not grieve my mother. The only way to avoid doing either will be for me to marry my darling privately, and keep the affair a secret until a fitting opportunity offers to publish it."

"A secret marriage! Mr. Brudenell! is that what you propose to my sister?"

"Why not, Hannah?"

"Secret marriages are terrible things!"

"Disappointed affections, broken hearts, early graves, are more terrible."

"Fudge!" was the word that rose to Hannah's lips, as she looked at the young man; but when she turned to her sister she felt that his words might be true.

"Besides, Hannah," he continued, "this will not be a secret marriage. You cannot call that a secret which will be known to four persons—the parson, you, Nora, and myself. I shall

not even bind you or Nora to keep the secret longer than you think it her interest to declare it. She shall have the marriage certificate in her own keeping, and every legal protection and defense; so that even if I should die suddenly—"

Nora gasped for breath.

—"she would be able to claim and establish her rights and position in the world. Hannah, you must see that I mean to act honestly and honorably," said the young man, in an earnest tone.

"I see that you do; but, Mr. Brudenell, it appears to me that the fatal weakness of which you have already spoken to me—the 'propensity to please'—is again leading you into error. You wish to save Nora, and you wish to spare your mother; and to do both these things, you are sacrificing—"

"What, Hannah?"

"Well—fair, plain, open, straight-forward, upright dealing, such as should always exist between man and woman."

"Hannah, you are unjust to me! Am I not fair, plain, open, straight-forward, upright, and all the rest of it in my dealing with you?"

"With us, yes; but—"

"With my mother it is necessary to be cautious. It is true that she has no right to oppose my marriage with Nora; but yet she would oppose it, even to death! Therefore, to save trouble and secure peace, I would marry my dear Nora quietly. Mystery, Hannah, is not necessarily guilt; it is often wisdom and mercy. Do not object to a little harmless mystery, that is besides to secure peace! Come, Hannah, what say you?"

"How long must this marriage, should it take place, be kept a secret?" inquired Hannah uneasily.

"Not one hour longer than you and Nora think it necessary that it should be declared! Still, I should beg your forbearance as long as possible. Come, Hannah, your answer!"

"I must have time to reflect. I fear I should be doing very wrong to consent to this marriage, and yet—and yet—But I must take a night to think of it! To-morrow, Mr. Brudenell, I will give you an answer!"

With this reply the young man was obliged to be contented. Soon after he arose and took his leave.

When he was quite out of hearing Nora arose and threw herself into her sister's arms, crying:

"Oh, Hannah, consent! consent! I cannot live without him!"

The elder sister caressed the younger tenderly; told her of all the dangers of a secret marriage; of all the miseries of an ill-sorted one; and implored her to dismiss her wealthy lover, and struggle with her misplaced love.

Nora replied only with tears and sobs, and vain repetitions of the words:

"I cannot live without him, Hannah! I cannot live without him!"

Alas, for weakness, willfulness, and passion! They, and not wise counsels, gained the day. Nora would not give up her lover; would not struggle with her love; but would have her own way.

At length, in yielding a reluctant acquiescence, Hannah said:

"I would never countenance this—never, Nora! but for one reason; it is that I know, whether I consent or not, you two, weak and willful and passionate as you are, will rush into this imprudent marriage all the same! And I think for your sake it had better take place with my sanction, and in my presence, than otherwise."

Nora clasped her sister's neck and covered her face with kisses.

"He means well by us, dear Hannah—indeed he does, bless him! So do not look so grave because we are going to be happy."

Had Herman felt sure of his answer the next day? It really seemed so; for when he made his appearance at the cottage in the morning he brought the marriage license in his pocket and a peripatetic minister in his company.

And before the astonished sisters had time to recover their self-possession Herman Brudenell's will had carried his purpose, and the marriage ceremony was performed. The minister then wrote out the certificate, which was signed by himself, and witnessed by Hannah, and handed to the bride.

"Now, dearest Nora," whispered the triumphant bridegroom, "I am happy, and you are safe!"

CHAPTER V

LOVE AND FATE

It was in the month of June they were married; when the sun shone with his brightest splendor; when the sky was of the clearest blue; when the grass of the freshest green, the woods in their fullest foliage, the flowers in their richest bloom, and all nature in her most luxuriant life! Yes, June was their honeymoon; the forest shades their bridal halls, and birds and flowers and leaves and rills their train of attendants. For weeks they lived a kind of fairy life, wandering together through the depths of the valley forest, discovering through the illumination of their love new beauties and glories in the earth and sky; new sympathies with every form of life. Were ever suns so bright, skies so clear, and woods so green as theirs, in this month of beauty, love, and joy!

"It seems to me that I must have been deaf and blind and stupid in the days before I knew you, Herman! for then the sun seemed only to shine, and now I feel that he smiles as well as shines; then the trees only seemed to bend under a passing breeze, now I know they stoop to caress us; then the flowers seemed only to be crowded, now I know they draw together to kiss; then indeed I loved nature, but now I know that she also is alive and loves me!" said Nora, one day, as they sat upon a bank of wild thyme under the spreading branches of an old oak tree that stood alone in a little opening of the forest.

"You darling of nature! you might have known that all along!" exclaimed Herman, enthusiastically pressing her to his heart.

"Oh, how good you are to love me so much! you—so high, so learned, so wealthy; you who have seen so many fine ladies —to come down to me, a poor, ignorant, weaver-girl!" said Nora humbly—for true love in many a woman is ever most humble and most idolatrous, abasing itself and idolizing its object.

At this moment a soft summer cloud floated between them and the blazing meridan sun, veiling its glory.

"Why, what is the matter, love? What has come over you?" inquired Herman, gently caressing her.

"I do not know; nothing more than that perhaps," answered Nora, pointing to the cloud that was now passing over the sun.

"'Nothing more than that.' Well, that has now passed, so smile forth again, my sun!" said Herman gayly.

"Ah, dear Herman, if this happy life could only last! this life in which we wander or repose in these beautiful summer woods, among rills and flowers and birds! Oh, it is like the Arcadia of which you read to me in your books, Herman! Ah, if it would only last!"

It was near the middle of December, when Mrs. Brudenell was busy with her last preparations for her removal to her newly purchased home in Washington City when the first rumor of Herman's visits to the hut reached her.

She was in the housekeeper's room, superintending in person the selection of certain choice pots of domestic sweetmeats from the family stores to be taken to the town-house, when Mrs. Spicer, who was attending her, said:

"If you please, ma'am, there's Jem Morris been waiting in the kitchen all the morning to see you."

"Ah! What does he want? A job, I suppose. Well, tell him to come in here," said the lady carelessly, as she scrutinized the label upon a jar of red currant jelly.

The housekeeper left the room to obey, and returned ushering in the individual, who was a mulatto about fifty years of age known as "professor."

"What was it brought you here?" she asked. "Be quick, if you please. I am very much occupied this morning."

"Yes, madam. It was something I heard and felt it my duty to tell you; because, you see, ma'am, I think it is the duty of every honest—"

"Come, come, Morris, I have no time to listen to an oration from you now. In two words, what had you to tell me?" interrupted the lady impatiently.

"Yes, madam. It were about young Mr. Herman, ma'am."

"Mr. Brudenell, if you please, Morris. My son is the head of his family."

"Certainly, madam. Mr. Brudenell."

"Well, what about Mr. Brudenell?"

"Yes, madam. You know he was away from home every day last spring and summer."

"I remember; he went to fish; he is very fond of fishing."

"Certainly, madam; but he was out every day this autumn."

"I am aware of that; he was shooting; he is an enthusiastic sportsman."

"To be sure, madam, so he is; but he is gone every day this winter."

"Of course, hunting; there is no better huntsman in the country than Mr. Brudenell."

"That is very true, madam; do you know what sort of game he is a-huntin' of?" inquired the professor meaningly, but most deferentially.

"Foxes, I presume," said the lady, with a look of inquiry.

"Yes, madam, sure enough; I suppose they is foxes, though in female form," said the professor dryly, but still respectfully.

"Whatever do you mean, Morris?" demanded the lady sternly.

"Well, madam, if it was not from a sense of duty, I would not dare to speak to you on this subject; for I think when a man presumes to meddle with things above his speer, he—'

"I remarked to you before, Morris, that I had no time to listen to your moral disquisitions. Tell me at once, then, what you meant to insinuate by that strange speech," interrupted the lady.

"Yes, madam, certainly. When you said Mr. Brudenell was a-hunting of foxes, I saw at once the correctness of your suspicions, madam; for they is foxes."

"Who are foxes?"

"Why, the Miss Worthses, madam."

"The Miss Worths! the weavers! why, what on earth have they to do with what we have been speaking of?"

"Yes, madam; the Miss Worthses is the foxes that Mr. Brudenell is a-huntin' of."

"The Miss Worths? My son hunting the Miss Worths! What do you mean, sir? Take care what you say of Mr. Brudenell, Morris."

"Yes, madam, certainly; I won't speak another word on the subject; and I beg your pardon for having mentioned it at all; which I did from a sense of duty to your family, madam thinking you ought to know it; but I am very sorry I made such a mistake, and again I beg your pardon, madam, and I humbly take my leave." And with a low bow the professor turned to depart.

"Stop, fool!" said Mrs. Brudenell. And the "fool" stopped and turned, hat in hand, waiting further orders.

"Do you mean to say that Mr. Brudenell goes after those girls?" asked the lady, raising her voice ominously.

"Yes, madam; leastways, after Miss Nora. You see, madam, young gentlemen will be young gentlemen, for all their ma can say or do; and when the blood is warm and the spirits is high, and the wine is in and the wit is out—"

"No preaching, I say! Pray are you a clergyman or a barrister? Tell me at once what reason you have for saying that my son goes to Worths' cottage?"

"Yes, madam; I has seen him often and often along of Miss Nora a-walking in the valley forest, when I have been there myself looking for herbs and roots to make up my vegetable medicines with. And I have seen him go home with her. And at last I said, 'It is my bounden duty to go and tell the madam.'"

"You are very sure of what you say?"

"Yes, madam, sure as I am of my life and my death."

"This is very annoying! very! I had supposed Mr. Brudenell to have had better principles. Of course, when a young gentleman of his position goes to see a girl of hers, it can be but with one object. I had thought Herman had better morals, and Hannah at least more sense! This is very annoying! very!" said the lady to herself, as her brows contracted with anger. After a few moments spent in silent thought, she said:

"It is the girl Nora, you say, he is with so much?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then go to the hut this very evening and tell that girl she must come up here to-morrow morning to see me. I thank you for your zeal in my service, Morris, and will find a way to reward you. And now you may do my errand."

"Certainly, madam! My duty to you, madam," said the professor, with a low bow, as he left the room and hurried away to deliver his message to Nora Worth.

"This is very unpleasant," said the lady. "But since Hannah has no more prudence than to let a young gentleman visit her sister, I must talk to the poor, ignorant child myself, and warn her that she risks her good name, as well as her peace of mind."

CHAPTER VI

MOTHER- AND DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

THE poor sisters had just finished their afternoon meal, cleaned their room, and settled themselves to their evening's

work. Nora was spinning gayly, Hannah weaving diligently —the whir of Nora's wheel keeping time to the clatter of Hannah's loom, when the latch was lifted and Herman Brudenell, bringing a brace of hares in his hand, entered the hut.

"There, Hannah, those are prime! I just dropped in to leave them, and to say it is certain my mother leaves for Washington on Saturday. On Sunday morning I shall bring my wife home; and you, too, Hannah; for if you will not consent to live with us, you must still stop with us until you and Gray are married and ready to go to the West," he said, throwing the game upon the table, and shaking hands with the sisters. His face was glowing from exercise and his eyes sparkling with joy.

"Sit down, Mr. Brudenell," said Hannah hospitably.

The young man hesitated, and a look of droll perplexity passed over his face as he said:

"Now don't tempt me, Hannah, my dear; don't ask me to stop this evening; and don't even let me do so if I wish to. You see I promised my mother to be home in time to meet some friends at dinner, and I am late now! Good-by sister; good-by, sweet wife! Sunday morning, Mrs. Herman Brudenell, you will take the head of your own table at Brudenell Hall!"

And giving Hannah a cordial shake of the hand, and Nora a warm kiss, he hurried from the hut.

A few minutes later, Jem Morris presented himself, taking off his hat and bowing low, as he said:

"Evening, Miss Hannah; evening, Miss Nora. Hope you finds yourselves well?"

"Why, law, professor, is that you? You have just come in time. Hannah wants you to put a new bottom in her tin saucepan and a new cover on her umbrella, and to mend her coffee-mill; it won't grind at all!" said Nora.

"Yes, miss; soon's ever I gets the time. See, I've got a well to dig at Colonel Mervin's and a chimney to build at Major Blackistone's, and a hearth to lay at Commodore Burgh's, and a roof to put over old Mrs. Jones'; and see that will take me all the rest of the week," objected Jem.

"Yes, miss; I wish I could, for I am pretty nearly run offen my feet," Jem agreed. "But what I was wishing to say to you, miss," he added, "was that the madam sent me here with a message to you."

"Who sent a message, Jem?"

"The madam up yonder, miss."

"Oh! you mean Mrs. Brudenell! It was to Hannah, I suppose, in relation to work," said Nora.

"Yes, miss; but this time it was not to Miss Hannah; it was to you, Miss Nora. 'Go up to the hut on the hill, and request Nora Worth to come up to see me this evening. I wish to have a talk with her?' Such were the madam's words, Miss Nora."

"Oh, Hannah!" breathed Nora, in terror.

"What can she want with my sister?" inquired Hannah.

"Well, yes, miss. She didn't say any further. And now, ladies, as I have declared my message, I must bid you good evening; as they expects me round to old uncle Jem Brown's to watch to-night." And with a deep bow the professor retired.

"Oh, Hannah!" wailed Nora, hiding her head in her sister's bosom.

"Well, my dear, what is the matter?"

"I am so frightened."

"What at?"

"The thoughts of Mrs. Brudenell!"

"Then don't go. You are not a slave to be at that lady's beck and call, I reckon!"

"Yes, but I am Herman's wife and her daughter, and I will not slight her request! I will go, Hannah, though I had rather plunge into ice water this freezing weather than meet that proud lady!" said Nora, shivering.

"Child, you need not do so! You are not bound! You owe no duty to Mrs. Brudenell, until Mr. Brudenell has acknowledged you as his wife and Mrs. Brudenell as her daughter."

When she was ready she asked:

"Are you going with me, Hannah?"

"Surely, my child," said the elder sister, reaching her bonnet and shawl.

The weather was intensely cold, and in going to Brudenell the sisters had to face a fierce northwest wind. In walking through the valley they were sheltered by the wood; but in climbing the hill upon the opposite side they could scarcely keep their feet against the furious blast.

They reached the house at last. Hannah remembered to go to the servants' door.

"Ah, Hannah! they little think that when next I come to Brudenell it will be in my own carriage, which will draw up at the main entrance," said Nora, with exultant pride, as she blew her cold fingers while they waited to be admitted.

The door was opened by Jovial, who started back at the sight of the sisters and exclaimed:

"Hi, Miss Hannah, and Miss Nora, you here? Loramity sake come in and lemme shet the door. Dere, go to de fire chillern! Name o' de law what fetch you out dis bitter night Wind sharp nuff to peel de skin right offen your faces!"

"Your mistress sent word that she wished to see Nora this evening, Jovial. Will you please to let her know that we are here?" asked Hannah, as she and her sister seated themselves beside the roaring hickory fire in the ample kitchen fireplace.

"Sartain, Miss Hannah! Anything to obligate the ladies," said Jovial, as he left the kitchen to do his errand.

Before the sisters had time to thaw, their messenger reëntered, saying:

"Mistess will 'ceive Miss Nora into de drawing-room."

Nora arose in trepidation to obey the summons.

Jovial led her along a spacious, well-lighted passage through an open door, on the left side of which she saw the dining-room and the dinner-table, at which Mr. Brudenell and his gentlemen guests still sat lingering over their wine. His back was towards the door, so that he could not see her, or know who was at that time passing. But as her eyes fell upon him, a glow of love and pride warmed and strengthened her heart, and she said:

"After all, he is my husband and this is my house! Why should I be afraid to meet the lady mother?"

And with a firm, elastic step Nora entered the drawing-room. At first she was dazzled and bewildered by its splendor and luxury. It was fitted up with almost Oriental magnificence. Her feet seemed to sink among blooming flowers in the soft rich texture of the carpet. Her eyes fell upon crimson velvet curtains that swept in massive folds from ceiling to floor; upon rare full-length pictures that filled up the recesses between the gorgeously draped windows; broad crystal mirror above the marble mantel-shelves; marble statuettes wherever there was a corner to hold one; soft crimson velvet sofas, chairs, ottomans and stools; inlaid tables; papier-mâché stands; and all the thousand miscellaneous vanities of a modern drawing-room.

"And to think that all this is mine! and how little she dreams of it!" said Nora, in an awe-struck whisper to her own heart, as she gazed around upon all this wealth until at last her eye fell upon the stately form of the lady as she sat alone upon a sofa at the back of the room.

"Come here, my girl, if you please," said Mrs. Brudenell.

Nora advanced timidly until she had reached to within a yard of the lady, when she stopped, curtsied, and stood with folded hands waiting, pretty much as a child would stand when called up before its betters for examination.

"Your name is Nora Worth, I believe," said the lady.

"My name is Nora, madam," answered the girl.

"You are Hannah Worth's younger sister?"

"Yes, madam."

"Now, then, my girl, do you know why I have sent for you here to-night?"

"No, madam."

"Are you quite sure that your conscience does not warn you?"

Nora was silent.

"Ah, I have my answer!" remarked the lady in a low voice; then raising her tone she said:

"I believe that my son, Mr. Herman Brudenell, is in the habit of daily visiting your house; is it not so?"

Nora looked up at the lady for an instant and then dropped her eyes.

"Quite sufficient! Now, my girl, as by your silence you have admitted all my suppositions, I must speak to you very seriously. And in the first place I would ask you, if you do not know, that when a gentleman of Mr. Brudenell's high position takes notice of a girl of your low rank, he does so with but one purpose? Answer me!"

"I do not understand you, madam."

"Very well, then, I will speak more plainly! Are you not aware, I would say, that when Herman Brudenell visits Nora Worth daily for months he means her no good?"

Nora paused for a moment to turn this question over in her mind before replying.

"I cannot think, madam, that Mr. Herman Brudenell could mean anything but good to any creature, however humble, whom he deigned to notice!"

"You are a natural fool or a very artful girl, one or the other!" said the lady, who was not very choice in her language when speaking in anger to her inferiors.

"You admit by your silence that Mr. Brudenell has been visiting you for months; and yet you imply that in doing so he means you no harm! I should think he meant your utter ruin!"

"Mrs. Brudenell!" exclaimed Nora, in a surprise so sorrowful and indignant that it made her forget herself and

her fears, "you are speaking of your own son, your only son; you are his mother, how can you accuse him of a base crime?"

"Recollect yourself, my girl! You surely forget the presence in which you stand! Baseness, crime, can never be connected with the name of Brudenell. But young gentlemen will be young gentlemen, and amuse themselves with just such credulous fools as you!" said the lady haughtily.

"Although their amusement ends in the utter ruin of its subject? Do you not call that a crime?"

"Girl, keep your place, if you please! Twice you have ventured to call me Mrs. Brudenell. To you I am madam. Twice you have asked me questions. You are here to answer, not to ask!"

"Pardon me madam, if I have offended you through my ignorance of forms," said Nora, bowing with gentle dignity for somehow or other she was gaining self-possession every moment.

"Will you answer my questions then; or continue to evade them?"

"I can answer you so far, madam—Mr. Brudenell has never attempted to amuse himself at the expense of Nora Worth nor is she one to permit herself to become the subject of any man's amusement, whether he be gentle or simple!"

"And yet he visits you daily, and you permit his visits! And this has gone on for months! You cannot deny it—you do not attempt to deny it!" She paused, as if waiting some reply; but Nora kept silence.

"And yet you say he is not amusing himself at your expense!"

"He is not, madam; nor would I permit anyone to do so!"

"I do not understand this! Girl! answer me! What are you to my son?"

Nora was silent.

"Answer me!" said the lady severely.

"I cannot, madam! Oh, forgive me, but I cannot answer you!" said Nora.

The lady looked fixedly at her for a few seconds; something in the girl's appearance startled her; rising, she advanced and pulled the heavy shawl from Nora's shoulders, and regarded her with an expression of mingled hauteur, anger, and scorn.

Nora dropped her head upon her breast and covered her blushing face with both hands.

"I am answered!" said the lady, throwing her shawl upon the floor and touching the bell rope.

Jovial answered the summons.

"Put this vile creature out of the house, and if she ever dares to show her face upon these premises again send for a constable and have her taken up," said Mrs. Brudenell hoarsely and white with suppressed rage, as she pointed to the shrinking girl before her.

"Come, Miss Nora, honey," whispered the old man kindly, as he picked up the shawl and put it over her shoulders and took her hand to lead her from the room; for, ah! old Jovial as well as his fellow-servants had good cause to know and understand the "white heat" of their mistress' anger.

As with downcast eyes and shrinking form Nora followed her conductor through the central passage and past the dining-room door, she once more saw Herman Brudenell still sitting with his friends at the table.

"Ah, if he did but know what I have had to bear within the last few minutes!" she said to herself as she hurried by.

When she reëntered the kitchen she drew the shawl closer around her shivering figure, pulled the bonnet farther over her blushing face, and silently took the arm of Hannah to return home.

The elder sister asked no question. And when they had left the house their walk was as silent as their departure had been. It required all their attention to hold their course through the darkness of the night, the intensity of the cold and the fury of the wind. It was not until they had reached the shelter of their poor hut, drawn the fire-brands together and sat down before the cheerful blaze, that Nora threw herself into the arms of her sister.

Hannah gathered her child closer to her heart and caressed her in silence until her fit of sobbing had exhausted itself, and then she inquired:

"What did Mrs. Brudenell want with you, dear?"

"Oh, Hannah, she had heard of Herman's visits here! She questioned and cross-questioned me. I would not admit anything, but then I could not deny anything either. I could give her no satisfaction, because you know my tongue was tied by my promise. Then she suspected me of being a bad girl. And she cross-questioned me more severely than ever. Still I could give her no satisfaction. And her suspicions seemed to be confirmed. And she looked at me—oh! with such terrible eyes, that they seemed to burn me up. I know, not only my poor face, but the very tips of my ears

seemed on fire. And suddenly she snatched my shawl off me, and oh! if her look was terrible before, it was consuming now! Hannah, I seemed to shrivel all up in the glare of that look, like some poor worm in the flame!" gasped Nora, with a spasmodic catch of her breath, as she once more clung to the neck of her sister.

"What next?" curtly inquired Hannah.

"She rang the bell and ordered Jovial to 'put this vile creature (meaning me) out'; and if ever I dared to show my face on the premises again, to send for a constable to take me up."

"The insolent woman!" exclaimed the elder sister, with a burst of very natural indignation. "She will have you taken up by a constable if ever you show your face there again, will she? We'll see that! I shall tell Herman Brudenell all about it to-morrow as soon as he comes! He must not wait until his mother goes to Washington! He must acknowledge you as his wife immediately. To-morrow morning he must take you up and introduce you as such to his mother. If there is to be an explosion, let it come! The lady must be taught to know who it is that she has branded with ill names, driven from the house and threatened with a constable! She must learn that it is an honorable wife whom she has called a vile creature; the mistress of the house whom she turned out of doors, and finally that it is Mrs. Herman Brudenell whom she has threatened with a constable!" Hannah had spoken with such vehemence and rapidity that Nora had found no opportunity to stop her. She could not, to use a common phrase, "get in a word edgeways." It was only now when Hannah paused for breath that Nora took up the discourse with:

"Hannah! Hannah! Hannah! how you do go on! Tell Herman Brudenell about his own mother's treatment of me, indeed! I will never forgive you if you do, Hannah! Do you think it will be such a pleasant thing for him to hear? Consider how much it would hurt him, and perhaps estrange him from his mother too! And what! shall I do anything, or consent to anything, to set my husband against his own mother? Never, Hannah! I would rather remain forever in my present obscurity. Besides, consider, she was not so much to blame for her treatment of me! You know she never imagined such a thing as that her son had actually married me, and—"

"I should have told her!" interrupted Hannah vehemently. "I should not have borne her evil charges for one moment

in silence! I should have soon let her know who and what I was! I should have take possession of my rightful place then and there! I should have rung a bell and sent for Mr. Herman Brudenell and had it out with the old lady once for all!"

"Hannah, I could not! my tongue was tied by my promise, and besides—"

"It was not tied!" again dashed in the elder sister, whose unusual vehemence of mood seemed to require her to do all the talking herself. "Herman Brudenell—he is a generous fellow with all his faults!—released both you and myself from our promise, and told us at any time when we should feel that the marriage ought not any longer to be kept secret it might be divulged. You should have told her!"

"Dear sister, how about you and Reuben? Have you told him of Mr. Brudenell's offer?"

"Yes, dear."

"And he will accept it?"

"Yes."

"And when shall you be married?"

"The very day that you shall be settled in your new home, dear. We both thought that best. I do not wish to go to Brudenell, Nora. Nothing can ever polish me into a fine lady; so I should be out of place there even for a day. Besides it would be awkward on account of the house-servants, who have always looked upon me as a sort of companion, because I have been their fellow-laborer in busy times. And they would not know how to treat me if they found me in the drawing-room or at the dinner-table! With you it is different; you are naturally refined! You have never worked out of our own house; you are their master's wife, and they will respect you as such. But as for me, I am sure I should embarrass everybody if I should go to Brudenell. And, on the other hand, I cannot remain here by myself. So I have taken Reuben's advice and agreed to walk with him to the church the same hour that Mr. Brudenell takes you home."

"That will be early Sunday morning."

"Yes, dear!"

"Well, God bless you, best of mother-sisters! May you have much happiness," said Nora, as she raised herself from Hannah's knees to prepare for rest.

CHAPTER VII

END OF THE SECRET MARRIAGE

After the departure of Nora Worth Mrs. Brudenell seated herself upon the sofa, leaned her elbow upon the little stand at her side, bowed her head upon her hand and fell into deep thought. Should she speak to Herman Brudenell of this matter? No! it was too late; affairs had gone too far; they must now take their course; the foolish girl's fate must be on her own head, and on that of her careless elder sister; they would both be ruined, that was certain; no respectable family would ever employ either of them again; they would starve. Well, so much the better; they would be a warning to other girls of their class, not to throw out their nets to catch gentlemen! Herman had been foolish, wicked even but then young men will be young men; and then, again of course it was that artful creature's fault! What could she, his mother, do in the premises? Not speak to her son upon the subject, certainly; not even let him know that she was cognizant of the affair! What then? She was going away with her daughters in a day or two! And good gracious, he would be left alone in the house! to do as he pleased! to keep bachelor's hall! to bring that girl there as his housekeeper, perhaps, and so desecrate his sacred, patrimonial home! No, that must never be! She must invite and urge her son to accompany herself and her sisters to Washington. But if he should decline the invitation and persist in his declination, what then? Why, as a last resort, she would give up the Washington campaign and remain at home to guard the sanctity of her son's house.

Having come to this conclusion, Mrs. Brudenell once more touched the bell, and when Jovial made his appearance she said:

"Let the young ladies know that I am alone, and they may join me now."

In a few minutes Miss Brudenell and Miss Eleanora entered the room, followed by the gentlemen, who had just left the dinner-table.

Coffee was immediately served, and soon after the guests took leave.

The young ladies also left the drawing-room, and retired to their chambers to superintend the careful packing of some

fine lace and jewelry. The mother and son remained alone together—Mrs. Brudenell seated upon her favorite back sofa and Herman walking slowly and thoughtfully up and down the whole length of the room.

"Herman," said the lady.

"Well, mother?"

"I have been thinking about our winter in Washington. I have been reflecting that myself and your sisters will have no natural protector there."

"You never had any in Paris or in London, mother, and yet you got on very well."

"That was a matter of necessity, then; you were a youth at college; we could not have your company; but now you are a young man, and your place, until you marry, is with me and my daughters. We shall need your escort, dear Herman, and be happier for your company. I should be very glad if I could induce you to accompany us to the city."

"And I should be very glad to do so, dear mother, but for the engagements that bind me here."

She did not ask the very natural question of what those engagements might be. She did not wish to let him see that she knew or suspected his attachment to Nora Worth, so she answered:

"You refer to the improvements and additions you mean to add to Brudenell Hall. Surely these repairs had better be deferred until the spring, when the weather will be more favorable for such work?"

"My dear mother, all the alterations I mean to have made inside the house can very well be done this winter. By the next summer I hope to have the whole place in complete order for you and my sisters to return and spend the warm weather with me."

The lady lifted her head. She had never known her son to be guilty of the least insincerity. If he had looked forward to the coming of herself and her daughters to Brudenell, to spend the next summer, he could not, of course, be contemplating the removal of Nora Worth to the house.

"Then you really expect us to make this our home, as heretofore, every summer?" she said.

"I have no right to expect such a favor, my dear mother; but I sincerely hope for it," said the son courteously.

"But it is not every young bachelor living on his own estate who cares to be restrained by the presence of his mother and sisters; such generally desire a life of more freedom and

gayety than would be proper with ladies in the house," said Mrs. Brudenell.

"But I am not one of those, mother; you know that my habits are very domestic."

"Yes. Well, Herman, it may just as well be understood that myself and the girls will return here to spend the summer. But now—the previous question! Can you not be prevailed on to accompany us to Washington?"

"My dear mother! anything on earth to oblige you I would do, if possible! But see! you go on Saturday, and this is Thursday night. There is but one intervening day. I could not make the necessary arrangements. I have much business to transact with my overseer; the whole year's accounts still to examine, and other duties to do before I could possibly leave home. But I tell you what I can do; I can hurry up these matters and join you in Washington at the end of the week, in full time to escort you and my sisters to that grand national ball of which I hear them incessantly talking."

"And remain with us for the winter?"

"If you shall continue to wish it, and if I can find a builder, decorator, and upholsterer whom I can send down to Brudenell Hall, to make the improvements, and whom I can trust to carry out my ideas."

The lady's heart leaped for joy! It was all right then! he was willing to leave the neighborhood! he had no particular attractions here! his affections were not involved! his acquaintance with that girl had been only a piece of transient folly, of which he was probably sick and tired! These were her thoughts as she thanked her son for his ready acquiescence in her wishes.

Meanwhile what were his purposes? To conciliate his mother by every concession except one! To let her depart from his house with the best feelings towards himself! then to write to her and announce his marriage; plead his great love as its excuse, and implore her forgiveness; then to keep his word and go to Washington, taking Nora with him, and remain in the capital for the winter if his mother should still desire him to do so.

A few moments longer the mother and son remained in the drawing-room before separating for the night—Mrs. Brudenell seated on her sofa and Herman walking slowly up and down the floor. Then the lady arose to retire, and Herman lighted a bedroom candle and put it in her hand.

When she had bidden him good night and left the room, he

resumed his slow and thoughtful walk. It was very late, and Jovial opened the door for the purpose of entering and putting out the lights; but seeing his master still walking up and down the floor, he retired, and sat yawning while he waited in the hall without.

The clock upon the mantel-piece struck one, and Herman Brudenell lighted his own candle to retire, when his steps were arrested by a sound—a common one enough at other hours and places, only unprecedented at that hour and in that place. It was the roll of carriage wheels upon the drive approaching the house.

Who could possibly be coming to this remote country mansion at one o'clock at night? While Herman Brudenell paused in expectancy, taper in hand, Jovial once more opened the door and looked in.

"Jovial, is that the sound of carriage wheels, or do I only fancy so?" asked the young man.

"Carriage wheels, marser, coming right to de house, too!" answered the negro.

"Who on earth can be coming here at this hour of the night? We have not an acquaintance intimate enough with us to take such a liberty. And it cannot be a belated traveler, for we are miles from any public road."

"Dat's jes' what I been a-sayin' to myself, sir. But we shall find out now directly."

While this short conversation went on, the carriage drew nearer and nearer, and finally rolled up to the door and stopped. Steps were rattled down, someone alighted, and the bell was rung.

Jovial flew to open the door—curiosity giving wings to his feet.

Mr. Brudenell remained standing in the middle of the drawing-room, attentive to what was going on without. He heard Jovial open the door; then a woman's voice inquired:

"Is this Brudenell Hall?"

"In course it is, Miss."

"And are the family at home?"

"Yes, miss, dey most, in gen'al, is at dis hour ob de night, dough dey don't expect wisiters."

"Are all the family here?"

"Dey is, miss."

"All right, coachman, you can take off the luggage," said the woman, and then her voice, sounding softer and farther off, spoke to someone still within the carriage: "We are quite right, my lady, this is Brudenell Hall; the family are

all at home, and have not yet retired. Shall I assist your ladyship to alight?"

Then a soft low voice replied:

"Yes, thank you, Phœbe. But first give the dressing-bag to the man to take in, and you carry Fidelle."

"Bub—bub—bub—bub—but," stammered the appalled Jovial, with his arms full of lap-dogs and dressing-bags that the woman had forced upon him, "you better some of you send in your names, and see if it won't be ill-convenient to the fam'ly afore you 'spects me to denounce a whole coach full of travelers to my masser! Who is you all, anyhow, young woman?"

"My lady will soon let you know who she is! Be careful of that dog! you are squeezing her! and here take this shawl, and this bird-cage, and this carpet-bag, and these umbrellas," replied the woman, overwhelming him with luggage. "Here, coachman! bring that large trunk into the hall! And come now, my lady; the luggage is all right."

As for Jovial, he dropped lap-dogs, bird-cages, carpet-bags, and umbrellas plump upon the hall floor, and rushed into the drawing-room, exclaiming:

"Masser, it's an invasion of de Goffs and Wandalls, or some other sich furriners! And I think the milishy ought to be called out."

"Don't be a fool, if you please. These are travelers who have missed their way, and are in need of shelter this bitter night. Go at once, and show them in here, and then wake up the housekeeper to prepare refreshments," said Mr. Brudenell.

"It is not my wishes to act foolish, marser; but it's enough to constunnate the sensoriest person to be tumbled in upon dis way at dis hour ob de night by a whole raft of strangers—men, and women, and dogs, and cats, and birds included!" mumbled Jovial, as he went to do his errand.

But his services as gentleman usher seemed not to be needed by the stranger, for as he left the drawing-room a lady entered, followed by a waiting maid.

The lady was clothed in deep mourning, with a thick crape veil concealing her face.

As Herman advanced to welcome her she threw aside her veil, revealing a pale, sad, young face, shaded by thick curls of glossy black hair.

At the sight of that face the young man started back, the pallor of death overspread his countenance as he sunk upon the nearest sofa, breathing in a dying voice:

"Berenice! You here! Is it you? Oh, Heaven have pity on us!"

"Phœbe, go and find out the housekeeper, explain who I am, and have my luggage taken up to my apartment. Then order tea in this room," said the lady, perhaps with the sole view of getting rid of her attendant; for as soon as the latter had withdrawn she threw off her bonnet, went to the overwhelmed young man, sat down beside him, put her arms around him, and drew his head down to meet her own, as she said, caressingly:

"You did not expect me, love? And my arrival here overcomes you."

"I thought you had been killed in that railway collision," came in hoarse and guttural tones from a throat that seemed suddenly parched to ashes.

"Poor Herman! and you had rallied from that shock of grief; but was not strong enough to sustain a shock of joy! I ought not to have given you this surprise! But try now to compose yourself, and give me welcome. I am here; alive, warm, loving, hungry even! a woman, and no specter risen from the grave, although you look at me just as if I were one! Dear Herman, kiss me! I have come a long way to join you!" she said, in a voice softer than the softest notes of the ringdove.

"How was it that you were not killed?" demanded the young man, with the manner of one who exacted an apology for a grievous wrong.

"My dearest Herman, I came very near being crushed to death; all that were in the same carriage with me perished. I was so seriously injured that I was reported among the killed; but the report was contradicted in the next day's paper."

"How was it that you were not killed, I asked you?"

"My dearest one, I suppose it was the will of Heaven that I should not be. I do not know any other reason."

"Why did you not write and tell me you had escaped?"

"Dear Herman, how hoarsely you speak! And how ill you look! I fear you have a very bad cold!" said the stranger tenderly.

"Why did you not write and tell me of your escape, I ask you? Why did you permit me to believe for months that you were no longer in life?"

"Herman, I thought surely if you should have seen the announcement of my death in one paper, you would see it contradicted, as it was, in half a dozen others. And as for

writing, I was incapable of that for months! Among other injuries, my right hand was crushed, Herman. And that it has been saved at all, is owing to a miracle of medical skill!"

"Why did you not get someone else to write, then?"

"Dear Herman, you forget! There was no one in our secret! I had no confidante at all! Besides, as soon as I could be moved, my father took me to Paris, to place me under the care of a celebrated surgeon there. Poor father! he is dead now, Herman! He left me all his money. I am one among the richest heiresses in England. But it is all yours now, dear Herman. When I closed my father's eyes my hand was still too stiff to wield a pen! And still, though there was no longer any reason for mystery, I felt that I would rather come to you at once than employ the pen of another to write. That is the reason, dear Herman, why I have been so long silent, and why at last I arrive so unexpectedly. I hope it is satisfactory. But what is the matter, Herman? You do not seem to be yourself! You have not welcomed me! you have not kissed me! you have not even called me by my name, since I first came in! Oh! can it be possible that after all you are not glad to see me?" she exclaimed, rising from her caressing posture and standing sorrowfully before him. Her face that had looked pale and sad from the first was now convulsed by some passing anguish.

He looked at that suffering face, then covered his eyes with his hands and groaned.

"What is this, Herman? Are you sorry that I have come? Do you no longer love me? What is the matter? Oh, speak to me!"

"The matter is—ruin! I am a felon, my lady! And it were better that you had been crushed to death in that railway collision than lived to rejoin me here! I am a wretch, too base to live! And I wish the earth would open beneath our feet and swallow us!"

The lady stepped back, appalled, and before she could think of a reply, the door opened and Mrs. Brudenell, who had been awakened by the disturbance, sailed into the room.

"It is my mother!" said the young man, struggling for composure. And rising, he took the hand of the stranger and led her to the elder lady, saying:

"This is the Countess of Hurstmonceaux, madam; I commend her to your care."

And having done this, he turned and abruptly left the room and the house.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VICTIM

"But one more day, Hannah! but one more day!" gayly xclaimed Nora Worth, as she busied herself in setting the oom in order on Friday morning.

"Yes, but one more day in any event! For even if the eather should change in this uncertain season of the year, nd a heavy fall of snow should stop Mrs. Brudenell's ourney, that shall not prevent Mr. Brudenell from acknowl-dging you as his wife on Sunday! for it is quite time this ere done, in order to save your name, which I will not have nger endangered!" said the elder sister, with grim deter-ination.

And she spoke with good reason; it was time the secret arriage was made public, for the young wife was destined oon to become a mother.

"Now, do not use any of these threats to Herman, when he omes this morning, Hannah! Leave him alone; it will all e right," said Nora, as she seated herself at her spinning-heel.

Hannah was already seated at her loom; and there was but ttle more conversation between the sisters, for the whir f the wheel and the clatter of the loom would have drowned eir voices, so that to begin talking, they must have stopped orking.

Nora's caution to Hannah was needless; for the hours of ne forenoon passed away, and Herman did not appear.

"I wonder why he does not come?" inquired Nora, strain-ng her eyes down the path for the thousandth time that ay.

"Perhaps, Nora, the old lady has been blowing him up, lso," suggested the elder sister.

"No, no, no—that is not it! Because if she said a word o him about his acquaintance with me, and particularly if she ere to speak to him of me as she spoke to me of myself, e would acknowledge me that moment, and come and fetch ne home, sooner than have me wrongly accused for an in-tant. No, Hannah, I will tell you what it is: it is his nother's last day at home, and he is assisting her with her ast preparations," said Nora.

"It may be so," replied her sister; and once more whir a clatter put a stop to the conversation.

The afternoon drew on.

"It is strange he does not come!" sighed Nora, as she p aside her wheel, and went to mend the fire and hang on t kettle for their evening meal.

Hannah made no comment, but worked on; for she was in hurry to finish the piece of cloth then in the loom; and so s diligently drove her shuttle until Nora had baked the bi cuits, fried the fish, made the tea, set the table, and called h to supper.

"I suppose he has had a great deal to do, Hannah; b perhaps he may get over here later in the evening," sigh Nora, as they took their seats at the table.

"I don't know, dear; but it is my opinion that the old lad even if she is too artful to blow him up about you, w contrive to keep him busy as long as possible to preve his coming."

"Now, Hannah, I wish you wouldn't speak so disrespe fully of Herman's mother. If she tries to prevent him fr coming to see me, it is because she thinks it her duty to so, believing of me as badly as she does."

"Yes! I do not know how you can breathe under su a suspicion! It would smother me!"

"I can bear it because I know it to be false, Hannah; a soon to be proved so! Only one day more, Hannah! only o day!" exclaimed Nora, gleefully clapping her hands.

They finished their supper, set the room in order, light the candle, and sat down to the knitting that was their usu evening occupation.

Their needles were clicking merrily, when suddenly, the midst of their work, footsteps were heard outside.

"There he is now!" exclaimed Nora gayly, starting up open the door.

But she was mistaken; there he was not, but an old woma covered with snow.

"Law, Mrs. Jones, is this you?" exclaimed Nora, in a to of disappointment and vexation.

"Yes, child—don't ye see it's me? Le'me come in out the snow," replied the dame, shaking herself and bustlir in.

"Thank y', children; and now, to pay you for that, I hav got sich a story to tell you! I've been saving of it up till got dry and warm, 'cause I knew if I did but give you a hi of it, you'd be for wanting to know all the particulars afo

was ready to tell 'em! But now I can sit myself down for a ood comfortable chat! And it is one, too, I tell you! good s a novel!" said the old woman, nodded her head knowngly.

"Oh, what is it about, Mrs. Jones?" inquired Hannah and Nora in a breath, as they stopped knitting and drew their hairs nearer together.

"Well, then," said the dame, hitching her chair between the isters, placing a hand upon each of their laps, and looking rom one to the other—"what would ye give to know, now?"

"Nonsense! a night's lodging and your breakfast!" laughed Nora.

"And ye'll get your story cheap enough at that! And now isten and open your eyes as wide as ever you can!" said he dame, repeating her emphatic gestures of laying her hands eavily upon the knees of the visitors and looking intently rom one eager face to the other. "Mr.—Herman—Brudenell —have—got—a—wife! There, now! What d'ye think o' hat! ain't you struck all of a heap?"

No, they were not; Hannah's face was perfectly calm; Nora's indeed was radiant, not with wonder, but with joy!

"There, Hannah! What did I tell you!" she exclaimed. 'Mrs. Brudenell has spoken to him and he has owned his marriage! But dear Mrs. Jones, tell me—was his mother very, very angry with him about it?" she inquired, turning o the visitor.

"Angry? Dear heart, no! pleased as Punch! 'peard 's if great weight was lifted offen her mind," replied the latter.

"There again, Hannah! What else did I tell you! Herman's mother is a Christian lady! She ill-used me only when he thought I was bad; now Herman has owned his marriage, and she is pleased to find that it is all right! Now sn't that good? Oh, I know I shall love her, and make her ove me, too, more than any high-bred, wealthy daughter-n-law ever could! And I shall serve her more than any of her own children ever would! And she will find out he true worth of a faithful, affectionate, devoted heart, hat would die to save her or her son, or live to serve oth! And she will love me dearly yet!" exclaimed Nora, vith a glow of enthusiasm suffusing her beautiful face.

"Now, what upon the face of the yeth be that gal -talking about? I want to tell my story!" exclaimed Mrs. Jones, who had been listening indignantly, without comprehending entirely Nora's interruption.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Jones," laughed the latter,

"I should not have jumped to the conclusion of your sto
I should have let you tell it in your own manner; though
doubt if you know all about it either, from the way y
talk."

"Don't I, though! I should like to know who knows mor

"Well, now, tell us all about it!"

"You've gone and put me out now, and I don't know wh
to begin."

"Well, then, I'll help you out—what time was it that M
Brudenell acknowledged his private marriage?"

"There now; how did you know it was a private marriag
I never said nothing about it being private yet! Hows'ev
I s'pose you so clever you guessed it, and anyway you gues
right; it were a private marriage. And when did he own
to it, you ask? Why, not as long as he could help it, y
may depend! Not until his lawful wife actilly arove up
Brudenell Hall, and that was last night about one o'clock

"Oh, there you are very much mistaken; it was but sev
in the evening," said Nora.

"There now, again! how do you know anything about
Somebody's been here afore me and been a-telling of y
I suppose; and a-telling of you wrong, too!" petulantly e
claimed the old woman.

"No, indeed, there has not been a soul here to-day; neith
have we heard a word from Brudenell Hall! Still, I thi
you must be mistaken as to the hour of the wife's arriv
and perhaps as to other particulars, too; but excuse me de
Mrs. Jones, and go on and tell the story."

"Well, but what made you say it was seven o'clock wh
his wife arrove?" inquired the gossip.

"Because that was really the hour that I went up
Brudenell. Hannah was with me and knows it."

"Law, honey, were you up to Brudenell yesterday ev
ning?"

"To be sure I was! I thought you knew it! Haven't y
just said that the marriage was not acknowledged until h
wife arrived?"

"Why, yes, honey; but what's that to do with it? with y
being there, I mean? Seems to me there's a puzzlement he
between us? Did you stay there till one o'clock, honey?"

"Why, no, of course not! We came away at eight."

"Then I'm blessed if I know what you're a-driving a
For, in course, if you come away at eight o'clock you couldn
a-seen her."

"Seen whom?" questioned Nora.

"Why, laws, his wife, child, as never arrove till one o'clock."

Nora burst out laughing; and in the midst of her mirthfulness exclaimed:

"There, now, Mrs. Jones, I thought you didn't know half the rights of the story you promised to tell us, and now I'm sure of it! Seems like you've heard Mr. Brudenell has acknowledged his marriage; but you haven't even found out who the lady is! Well, I could tell you; but I won't yet, without his leave."

"So you know all about it, after all? How did you find out?"

"Never mind how; you'll find out how I knew it when you hear the bride's name," laughed Nora.

"But I have hearn the bride's name; and a rum un it is, too! Lady, Lady Hoist? no! Hurl? no! Hurt? yes, that is it! Lady Hurt-me-so, that's the name of the lady he's done married!" said the old woman confidently.

"Ha, ha, ha! I tell you what, Hannah, she has had too much wine, and it has got into her poor old head!" laughed Nora, laying her hand caressingly upon the red-cotton handkerchief that covered the gray hair of the gossip.

"No, it ain't, nuther! I never drunk the half of what you gin me! I put it up there on the mantel, and kivered it over with the brass candlestick, to keep till I go to bed. No, indeed! my head-piece is as clear as a bell!" said the old woman, nodding.

"But what put it in there, then, that Mr. Herman Brudenell has married a lady with a ridiculous name?" laughed Nora.

"Acause he have, honey! which I would a-told you all about it ef you hadn't a-kept on, and kept on, and kept on interrupting of me!"

"Nora," said Hannah, speaking for the first time in many minutes, and looking very grave, "she has something to tell, and we had better let her tell it.

"Very well, then! I'm agreed! Go on, Mrs. Jones!"

"Hem-m-m!" began Mrs. Jones, loudly clearing her throat. "Now I'll tell you, jest as I got it, this arternoon, first from Uncle Jovial, and then from Mrs. Spicer, and then from Madam Brudenell herself, and last of all from my own precious eyesight! 'Pears like Mr. Brudenell fell in long o' this Lady Hurl-my-soul—Hurt-me-so, I mean,—while he was out yonder in forring parts. And 'pears she was a very great lady indeed, and a beautiful young widder besides.

So she and Mr. Brudenell, they fell in love long of each othe
But law, you see her kinfolks was bitter agin her a-marryin
of him—which they called him commoner, as isn't true, yo
know, 'cause he is not one of the common sort at all—thoug
I s'pose they being so high, looked down upon him as sic
Well, anyways, they was as bitter against her marrying
him, as his kinsfolks would be agin him a-marrying of yo
And, to be sure, being of a widder, she a-done as she please
only she didn't want to give no offense to her old father, wh
was very rich and very proud of her, who was his onliest chi
he ever had in the world; so to make a long rigamarole sho
they runned away, so they did, Mr. Brudenell and her, a
they got married private, and never let the old man know
long as ever he lived—"

"Hannah! what is she talking about?" gasped Nora, wh
heard the words, but could not take in the sense of th
story.

"Hush! I do not know yet, myself; there is some mistak
listen," whispered Hannah, putting her arms over her you
sister's shoulders, for Nora was then seated on the floor b
side Hannah's chair, with her head upon Hannah's la
Mrs. Jones went straight on.

"And so that was easy enough, too; as soon arter they w
married, Mr. Herman Brudenell, you know he was a-comi
of age, and so he had to be home to do business long of h
guardeens, and take possession of his 'states and so on; a
so he come, and kept his birthday last April! And—"

"Hannah! Hannah! what does this all mean? It cann
be true! I know it is not true! And yet, oh, Heaven! eve
word she speaks goes through my heart like a red hot spea
Woman! do you mean to say that Mr.—Mr. Herman Brud
nell left a wife in Europe when he came back here?" cri
Nora, clasping her hands in vague, incredulous anguish.

"Hush, hush, Nora, be quiet, my dear. The very questi
you ask does wrong to your—to Herman Brudenell, wh
with all his faults is still the soul of honor," murmur
Hannah soothingly.

"Yes, I know he is; and yet—but there is some stupid mi
take," sighed Nora, dropping her head upon her sister's la

Straight through this low, loving talk went the words
Mrs. Jones:

"Well, now, I can't take upon myself to say whether
was Europe or London, or which of them outlandish place
but, anyways, in some on 'em he did leave his wife a-livi
along of her 'pa. But you see 'bout a month ago, her '

he died, a-leaving of all his property to his onliest darter, Lady Hoist, Hurl, Hurt, Hurt-my-toe. No! Hurt-me-so, Lady Hurt-me-so! I never can get the hang of her outlandish name. Well, then you know there wa'n't no call to keep the marriage secret no more. So what does my lady do but want to put a joyful surprise on the top of her husband; so without writing of him a word of what she was a-gwine to do, soon as ever the old man was buried and the will read, off she sets and comes over the sea to New York, and took a boat there for Baymouth, and hired of a carriage and rid over to Brudenell Hall, and arrove there at one o'clock last night, as I telled you afore!"

"Are you certain that all this is true?" murmured Hannah, in a husky undertone.

"Hi, Miss Hannah, didn't Jovial, and Mrs. Spicer, and Madam Brudenell herself tell me? And besides I seen the young cre'tur' with my own eyes, dressed in deep mourning, which it was a fine black crape dress out and out, and a sweet pretty cre'tur' she was too, only so pale!"

"Hannah!" screamed Nora, starting up, "it is false! I know it is false! but I shall go raving mad if I do not prove it so!" And she rushed to the door, tore it open, and ran out into the night and storm.

"What in the name of the law ails her?" inquired Mrs. Jones.

"Nora! Nora! Nora!" cried Hannah, running after her. "Come back! come in! you will get your death! Are you crazy? Where are you going in the snowstorm this time of night, without your bonnet and shawl, too?"

"To Brudenell Hall, to find out the rights of this story" were the words that came from a great distance wafted by the wind.

"Come back! come back!" shrieked Hannah. But there was no answer.

Hannah rushed into the hut, seized her own bonnet and shawl and Nora's and ran out again.

"Where are you going? What's the matter? What ails that girl?" cried old Mrs. Jones.

Hannah never even thought of answering her, but sped down the narrow path leading into the valley, and through it up towards Brudenell as fast as the dark night, the falling snow, and the slippery ground would permit; but it was too late; the fleet-footed Nora was far in advance.

CHAPTER IX

THE RIVALS

HEEDLESS as the mad, of night, of storm, and danger, Nora hurried desperately on. She was blinded by the darkness and smothered by the thickly-falling snow, and torn by the thorns and briers of the bushwood; but not for these impediments would the frantic girl abate her speed. She slipped often, hurt herself sometimes, and once she fell and rolled down the steep hill-side until stopped by a clump of cedars. But she scrambled up, wet, wounded, and bleeding, and tore on through the depths of the valley and up the opposite heights. Panting, breathless, dying almost, she reached Brudenell Hall.

The house was closely shut up to exclude the storm, and outside the strongly barred window-shutters there was a barricade of drifted snow. The roofs were all deeply covered with snow, and it was only by its faint white glare in the darkness that Nora found her way to the house. Her feet sank half a leg deep in the drifts as she toiled on towards the servants' door. All was darkness there! if there was any light, it was too closely shut in to gleam abroad.

For a moment Nora leaned against the wall to recover a little strength, and then she knocked. But she had to repeat the summons again and again before the door was opened. Then old Jovial appeared—his mouth and eyes wide open with astonishment at seeing the visitor.

"Name o' de law, Miss Nora, dis you? What de matter? Is you clean tuk leave of your senses to be a-comin' up here, dis hour of de night in snowstorm?" he cried.

"Let me in, Jovial! Is Mr. Herman Brudenell at home?" gasped Nora, as without waiting for an answer she pushed past him and sank into the nearest chair.

"Marser Bredinell home? No, miss! Nor likewise been home since late last night. He went away 'mediately arter interdoocing de young madam to de ole one; which she tumbled in upon us with a whole raft of waiting maids, and men, and dogs, and birds, and gold fishes, and debil knows what all besides, long arter midnight last night—and so he hasn't been hearn on since, and de fambly is in de greatest 'stress and anxiety. Particular she, poor thing, as comed so

far to see him! And we no more s'picioning as he had a wife, nor anything at all, 'till she tumbled right in on top of us! Law, Miss Nora, somefin werry particular must have fotch you out in de snow to-night, and 'deed you do look like you had heard bad news! Has you hearn anything 'bout him, honey?"

"Is it true, then?" moaned Nora, in a dying tone, without heeding his last question.

"Which true, honey?"

"About the foreign lady coming here last night and claiming to be his wife?"

"As true as gospel, honey—which you may judge the astonishment is put on to us all."

"Jovial, where is the lady?"

"Up in de drawing-room, honey, if she has not 'tired to her chamber."

"Show me up there, Jovial, I must see her for myself," Nora wailed, with her head fallen upon her chest.

"Now, sure as the world, honey, you done heard somefin 'bout de poor young marser? Is he come to an accident, honey?" inquired the man very uneasily.

"Who?" questioned Nora vaguely.

"The young marser, honey; Mr. Herman Brudenell, chile!"

"What of him?" cried Nora—a sharp new anxiety added to her woe.

"Why, law, honey, ain't I just been a-telling of you? In one half an hour arter de forein lady tumbled in, young marse lef' de house an' haint been seen nor heard on since. I t'ought maybe you'd might a hearn what's become of him. It is mighty hard on her, poor young creatur, to be fairly forsok de very night she come."

"Ah!" cried Nora, in the sharp tones of pain—"take me to that lady at once! I must, must see her! I must hear from her own lips—the truth!"

"Come along then, chile! Sure as the worl' you has hearn somefin, dough you won't tell me; for I sees it in your face; you's as white as a sheet, an' all shakin' like a leaf an' ready to drop down dead! You won't let on to me; but mayhaps you may to her," said Jovial, as he led the way along the lighted halls to the drawing-room, which he opened, announcing:

"Here's Miss Nora Worth, mistess, come to see Lady Hurtmy-soul."

And as soon as Nora, more like a ghost than living crea-

ture, had glided in, he shut the door, went down on his knees outside and applied his ear to the key-hole.

Meanwhile Nora found herself once more in the gorgeously furnished, splendidly decorated, and brilliantly lighted drawing-room that had been the scene of her last night's humiliation. But she did not think of that now, in this supreme crisis of her fate.

Straight before her, opposite the door by which she entered, was an interesting tableau, in a dazzling light—it was a sumptuous fireside picture—the coal-fire glowing between the polished steel bars of the wide grate, the white marble mantelpiece, and above that, reaching to the lofty ceiling, a full-length portrait of Herman Brudenell; before the fire an inlaid mosaic table, covered with costly books, work-boxes, hand-screens, a vase of hot-house flowers, and other elegant trifles of luxury; on the right of this, in a tall easy-chair, sat Mrs. Brudenell; on this side sat the Misses Brudenell; these three ladies were all dressed in slight mourning, if black silk dresses and white lace collars can be termed such; and they were all engaged in the busy idleness of crochet work; but on a luxurious crimson velvet sofa, drawn up to the left side of the fire, reclined a lady dressed in the deepest mourning, and having her delicate pale, sad face half veiled by her long, soft black ringlets.

While Nora gazed breathlessly upon this pretty creature, whom she recognized at once as the stranger, Mrs. Brudenell slowly raised her head and stared at Nora.

"You here, Nora Worth! How dare you? Who had the insolence to let you in?" she said, rising and advancing to the bell-cord. But before she could pull it Nora Worth lifted her hand with that commanding power despair often lends to the humblest, and said:

"Stop, madam, this is no time to heap unmerited scorn upon one crushed to the dust already, and whose life cannot possibly offend you or cumber the earth much longer. I wish to speak to that lady."

"With me!" exclaimed Lady Hurstmonceux, rising upon her elbow and gazing with curiosity upon the beautiful statue that was gliding toward her as if it were moved by invisible means.

Mrs. Brudenell paused with her hand upon the bell-tassel and looked at Nora, whose lovely face seemed to have been thus turned to stone in some moment of mortal suffering, so agonized and yet so still it looked! Her hair had fallen loose and hung in long, wet, black strings about her white bare

neck, for she had neither shawl nor bonnet; her clothes were soaked with the melted snow, and she had lost one shoe in her wild night walk.

Mrs. Brudenell shuddered with aversion as she looked at Nora; when she found her voice she said:

"Do not let her approach you, Berenice. She is but a low creature; not fit to speak to one of the decent negroes even; and besides she is wringing wet and will give you a cold."

"Poor thing! she will certainly take one herself, mamma; she looks too miserable to live! If you please, I would rather talk with her! Come here, my poor girl! what is it that troubles you so? Tell me! Can I help you? I will, cheerfully, if I can." And the equally "poor" lady, poor in happiness as Nora herself, put her hand in her pocket and drew forth an elegant portmonnaie of jet.

"Put up your purse, lady! It is not help that I want—save from God! I want but a true answer to one single question, if you will give it to me."

"Certainly, I will, my poor creature; but stand nearer the fire; it will dry your clothes while we talk."

"Thank you, madam, I do not need to."

"Well, then, ask me the question that you wish to have answered. Don't be afraid, I give you leave, you know," said the lady kindly.

Nora hesitated, shivered, and gasped; but could not then ask the question that was to confirm her fate; it was worse than throwing the dice upon which a whole fortune was staked; it was like giving the signal for the ax to fall upon her own neck. At last, however, it came, in low, fearful, but distinct words:

"Madam, are you the wife of Mr. Herman Brudenell?"

"Nora Worth, how dare you? Leave the room and the house this instant, before I send for a constable and have you taken away?" exclaimed Mrs. Brudenell, violently pulling at the bell-cord.

"Mamma, she is insane, poor thing! do not be hard on her," said Lady Hurstmonceaux gently; and then turning to poor Nora she answered, in the manner of one humoring a maniac:

"Yes, my poor girl, I am the wife of Mr. Herman Brudenell. Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing, madam," was the answer that came sad, sweet, and low as the wail of an Aeolian harp swept by the south wind.

The stranger lady's eyes were bent with deep pity upon her; but before she could speak again Mrs. Brudenell broke into the discourse by exclaiming:

"Do not speak to her, Berenice! I warned you not to let her speak to you, but you would not take my advice, and now you have been insulted."

"But, mamma, she is insane, poor thing; some great misery has turned her brain; I am very sorry for her," said the kind-hearted stranger.

"I tell you she is not! She is as sane as you are! Look at her! Not in that amazed, pitying manner, but closely and critically, and you will see what she is; one of those low creatures who are the shame of women and the scorn of men. And if she has misery for her portion, she has brought it upon herself, and it is a just punishment."

The eyes of Lady Hurstmonceaux turned again upon the unfortunate young creature before her, and this time she did examine her attentively, letting her gaze rove over her form.

This time Nora did not lift up her hands to cover her burning face; that marble face could never burn or blush again; since speaking her last words Nora had remained standing like one in a trance, stone still, with her head fallen upon her breast, and her arms hanging listlessly by her side. She seemed dead to all around her.

Not so Lady Hurstmonceaux; as her eyes roved over this form of stone her pale face suddenly flushed, her dark eyes flashed, and she sprang up from the sofa, asking the same question that Mrs. Brudenell had put the evening before.

"Girl! what is it to you whether Mr. Brudenell has a wife or not? What are you to Mr. Herman Brudenell?"

"Nothing, madam; nothing for evermore," wailed Nora, without looking up or changing her posture.

"Humph! I am glad to hear it, I am sure!" grunted Mrs. Brudenell.

"Nothing? you say; nothing?" questioned Lady Hurstmonceaux.

"Nothing in this world, madam; nothing whatever! so be at ease." It was another wail of the storm-swept heart-strings.

"I truly believe you; I ought to have believed without asking you; but who, then, has been your betrayer, my poor girl?" inquired the young matron in tones of deepest pity.

This question at length shook the statue; a storm passed through her; she essayed to speak, but her voice failed.

"Tell me, poor one; and I will do what I can to right your wrongs. Who is it?"

"Myself!" moaned Nora, closing her eyes as if to shut out all light and life, while a spasm drew back the corners of her mouth and convulsed her face.

"Enough of this, Berenice! You forget the girls!" said Mrs. Brudenell, putting her hand to the bell and ringing again.

"I beg your pardon, madam; I did indeed forget the presence of the innocent and happy in looking upon the erring and wretched," said Lady Hurstmonceaux.

"That will do," said the elder lady. "Here is Jovial at last! Why did you not come when I first rang?" she demanded of the negro, who now stood in the door.

"I 'clare, mist'ess, I never heerd it de fust time, madam."

"Keep your ears open in future, or it will be the worse for you! And now what excuse can you offer for disobeying my express orders, and not only admitting this creature to the house, but even bringing her to our presence?" demanded the lady severely.

"I clare 'fore my 'vine Marster, madam, when Miss Nora come in de storm to de kitchen-door, looking so wild and scared like, and asked to see de young madam dere, I t'ought in my soul how she had some news of de young marster to tell! an' dat was de why I denounced her into dis drawin'-room."

"Do not make such a mistake again! if you do I will make you suffer severely for it! And you, shameless girl! if you presume to set foot on these premises but once again, I will have you sent to the work-house as a troublesome vagrant."

Nora did not seem to hear her; she had relapsed into her stony, trance-like stupor.

"And now, sir, since you took the liberty of bringing her in, put her out—out of the room, and out of the house!" said Mrs. Brudenell.

"Mamma! what! at midnight! in the snow-storm?" exclaimed Lady Hurstmonceaux, in horror.

"Yes! she shall not desecrate the bleakest garret, or the lowest cellar, or barest barn on the premises!"

"Mamma! It would be murder! She would perish!" pleaded the young lady.

"Not she! Such animals are used to exposure! And if she and all like her were to 'perish,' as you call it, the world would be so much the better for it! They are the pests of society!"

"Mamma, in pity, look at her! consider her situation! She would surely die! and not alone, mamma! think of that!" pleaded Berenice.

"Jovial! am I to be obeyed or not?" sternly demanded the elder lady.

"Come, Miss Nora; come, my poor, poor child," said Jovial, in a low tone, taking the arm of the miserable girl, who turned, mechanically, to be led away.

"Jovial, stop a moment! Mrs. Brundenell, I have surely some little authority in my husband's house; authority that I should be ashamed to claim in the presence of his mother, were it not to be exercised in the cause of humanity. This girl must not leave the house to-night," said Berenice respectfully, but firmly.

"Lady Hurstmonceaux, if you did but know what excellent cause you have to loathe that creature, you would not oppose my orders respecting her; if you keep her under your roof this night you degrade yourself; and, finally, if she does not leave the house at once I and my daughters must—midnight and the snow-storm, notwithstanding. We are not accustomed to domicile with such wretches," said the old lady grimly.

Berenice was not prepared for this extreme issue; Mrs. Brudenell's threat of departing with her daughters at midnight, and in the storm, shocked and alarmed her; and the other words reawakened her jealous misgivings. Dropping the hand that she had laid protectingly upon Nora's shoulder, she said:

"It shall be as you please, madam. I shall not interfere again."

This altercation had now aroused poor Nora to the consciousness that she herself was a cause of dispute between the two ladies; so putting her hand to her forehead and looking around in a bewildered way, she said:

"No; it is true; I have no right to stop here now; I will go!"

"Jovial," said Berenice, addressing the negro, "have you a wife and a cabin of your own?"

"Yes, madam; at your service."

"Then let it be at my service in good earnest to-night, Jovial; take this poor girl home, and ask your wife to take care of her to-night; and receive this as your compensation," she said, putting a piece of gold in the hand of the man.

"There can be no objection to that, I suppose, madam?" she inquired of Mrs. Brudenell.

"None in the world, unless Dinah objects; it is not every honest negro woman that will consent to have a creature like that thrust upon her. Take her away, Jovial!"

"Come, Miss Nora, honey; my ole 'oman ain't agwine to turn you away for your misfortins: we leabes dat to white folk; she'll be a mother to you, honey; and I'll be a father; an' I wish in my soul as I knowed de man as wronged you; if I did, if I didn't give him a skin-full ob broken bones if he was as white as cotton wool, if I didn't, my name ain't Mr. Jovial Brudenell, esquire, and I ain't no gentleman. And if Mr. Reuben Gray don't hunt him up and punish him, he ain't no gentleman, neither!" said Jovial, as he carefully led his half fainting charge along the passages back to the kitchen.

The servants had all gone to bed, except Jovial, whose duty it was, as major-domo, to go all around the house the last thing at night to fasten the doors and windows and put out the fires and lights. So when they reached the kitchen it was empty, though a fine fire was burning in the ample chimney.

"There, my poor hunted hare, you sit down there an' warm yourself good, while I go an' wake up my ole 'oman, an' fetch her here to get something hot for you, afore takin' of you to de cabin, an' likewise to make a fire dere for you; for I 'spects Dinah hab let it go out," said the kind-hearted old man, gently depositing his charge upon a seat in the chimney corner and leaving her there while he went to prepare for her comfort.

When she was alone Nora, who had scarcely heeded a word of his exhortation, sat for a few minutes gazing woefully into vacancy; then she put her hand to her forehead, passing it to and fro, as if to clear away a mist—a gesture common to human creatures bewildered with sorrow; then suddenly crying out:

"My Lord! It is true! and I have no business here! It is a sin and a shame to be here! or anywhere! anywhere in the world!" And throwing up her arms with a gesture and wild despair, she sprang up, tore open the door, and the second time that night rushed out into the storm and darkness.

Jovial had just come back into the room and discovered that Nora was gone, when a figure came rushing in through the kitchen door.

"Oh, Jovial! I am looking for poor Nora! Have you seen anything of her?" asked Hannah anxiously.

"She was here a-sittin' by dat fire, not half an hour ago.

And I lef' her to go and fetch my ole 'oman to get somefin hot, and when I come back, jes' dis wery minute, she's gone!"

"Where, where did she go?" asked Hannah, clasping her hands in the agony of her anxiety.

"I go look for her now! I won't lose no more time talkin'," and the old man clapped his hat upon his head and picked up his lantern.

"I will go with you, Jovial," said Nora's sister.

"No, Miss Hannah, don't you 'tempt it; tain't no night for no 'oman to be out."

"And dat a fact, Miss Hannah! don't you go! I can't 'mit of it! You stay here long o' me till my ole man fines her and brings her back here; an' I'll have a bit of supper ready, an' you'll both stop wid us all night," suggested Dinah.

"I thank you both, but I cannot keep still while Nora is in danger! I must help in the search for her," insisted Hannah, with the obstinacy of a loving heart, as she wrapped her shawl more closely around her shoulders and followed the old man out in the midnight storm. It was still snowing very fast. Her guide went a step in front with the lantern throwing a feeble light upon the soft white path that seemed to sink under their feet as they walked. The old man peered about on the right and left and straight before him, so as to miss no object in his way that might be Nora.

"Jovial," said Hannah, as they crept along, "is it true about the young foreign lady that arrived here last night and turned out to be the wife of Mr. Herman?"

"All as true as gospel, honey," replied the old man, who in his love of gossip, immediately related to Hannah all the particulars of the arrival of Lady Hurstmonceaux and the flight of Herman Brudenell. "Seems like he run away at the sight of his wife, honey; and 'pears like she thinks so too 'cause she's taken of it sorely to heart, scarce' holdin' up her head since. And it is a pity for her, too, poor young thing; for she's a sweet perty young cre'tur', and took Miss Nora's part like an angel when de old madam was a-callin' of her names, and orderin' of her out'n de house."

"Calling her names! ordering her out of the house! Did Mrs. Brudenell dare to treat Nora Worth so?" cried Hannah indignantly.

"Well, honey, she did rayther, that's a fact. Law, honey you know yourself how ha'sh ladies is to poor young gals as

ıas done wrong. A hawk down on a chicken ain't nuffin o 'em!"

"But my sister has done no wrong; Nora Worth is as innocent as an angel, as honorable as an empress. I can prove it, and I will prove it, let the consequences to the Brudenells be what they may! Called her ill names, did she? Very well! whether my poor wronged child lives or dies this bitter night, I will clear her character to-morrow, let who will be blackened instead of her! Ordered her out of the house, did she? All right! we will soon see how long the heir himself will be permitted to stop there! There's law in the land, for rich as well as poor, I reckon! Threatened her with a constable, did she? Just so! I wonder how she will feel when her own son is dragged off to prison! That will take her down—"

Hannah's words were suddenly cut short, for Jovial, who was going on before her, fell sprawling over some object that lay directly across the path, and the lantern rolled down the hill.

"What is the matter, Jovial?" she inquired.

"Honey, I done fell—fell over somefin' or oder; it is—aw, yes—"

"What, Jovial?"

"It's a 'oman, honey; feels like Miss Nora."

In an instant Hannah was down on her knees beside the fallen figure, clearing away the snow that covered it.

"It is Nora," she said, trying to lift the insensible body; but it was a cold, damp, heavy weight, deeply bedded in the snow, and resisted all her efforts.

"Oh, Jovial, I am afraid she is dead! and I cannot get her up! You come and try!" wept Hannah.

"Well, there now, I knowed it—I jest did; I knowed if she was turned out in de snow-storm this night she'd freeze to death! Ole mist'ess ain't no better dan a she-bearess!" grumbled the old man, as he rooted his arms under the cold dead weight of the unfortunate girl, and with much tugging succeeded in raising her.

"Now, den, Miss Hannah, hadn't I better tote her back to my ole 'oman?"

"No; we are much nearer the hut than the hall, and even if it were not so, I would not have her taken back there."

They were in fact going up the path leading to the hut on the top of the hill. So, by dint of much lugging and tugging, and many breathless pauses to rest, the old man succeeded in bearing his lifeless burden to the hut.

CHAPTER X

THE MARTYRS OF LOVE

So Nora's lifeless form was laid upon the bed. Old Mrs Jones, who had fallen asleep in her chair, was arouse by the disturbance, and stumbled up only half awake to se what was the matter, and to offer her assistance.

Old Jovial had modestly retired to the chimney corne leaving the poor girl to the personal attention of her siste

Hannah had thrown off her shawl and bonnet, and wa hastily divesting Nora of her wet garments, when the ol nurse appeared at her side.

"Oh, Mrs. Jones, is she dead?" cried the elder sister.

"No," replied the oracle, putting her warm hand upon th heart of the patient, "only in a dead faint and chilled to th marrow of her bones, poor heart! Whatever made her ru out so in this storm? Where did you find her? had sh fallen down in a fit? What was the cause on it?" she went o to hurry question upon question, with the vehemence of a old gossip starving for sensation news.

"Oh, Mrs. Jones, this is no time to talk! we must d something to bring her to life!" wept Hannah.

"That's a fact! Jovial, you good-for-nothing, lazy, lun bering nigger, what are ye idling there for, a-toasting o your crooked black shins? Put up the chunks and har on the kettle directly," said the nurse with authority.

Poor old Jovial, who was anxious to be of service, waitin only to be called upon, and glad to be set to work, sprung u eagerly to obey this mandate.

Thanks to the huge logs of wood used in Hannah's wid chimney, the neglected fire still burned hotly, and Jovi soon had it in a roaring blaze around the suspended kettl

"And now, Hannah, you had better get out her dry cloth and a thick blanket, and hang 'em before the fire to warı And give me some of that wine and some allspice to heat continued Mrs. Jones.

In a little while Nora opened her eyes calmly and look around. Hannah bent over her, murmuring:

"Nora, darling, how do you feel? Speak to me, my pet

"Stoop down to me, Hannah! low, lower still, I want whisper to you."

Hannah put her ear to Nora's lips.

"Oh, Hannah, it was all true! he was married to another woman." And as she gasped these words with a great sob, her face became convulsed again with agony, and she covered it with her hands.

"Do not take this so much to heart, sweet sister. Heaven knows that you were innocent, and the earth shall know it, too; as for him, he was a villain and a hypocrite not worth a tear," whispered Hannah.

"Oh, no, no, no! I am sure he was not to blame. I cannot tell you why, because I know so little; but I feel that he was faultless," murmured Nora, as the spasm passed off, leaving her in that elysium of physical ease which succeeds great pain.

Hannah was intensely disgusted by Nora's misplaced confidence; but she did not contradict her, for she wished to soothe, not to excite the sufferer.

For a few minutes Nora lay with her eyes closed and her hands crossed upon her bosom, while her watchers stood in silence beside her bed. Then springing up with widely glaring eyes she seized her sister, crying out:

"Hannah! Oh, Hannah!"

"What is it, child?" exclaimed Hannah, in affright.

"I do believe I'm dying—and, oh! I hope I am."

"Oh, no, ye ain't a-dying, nyther; there's more life than death in this 'ere; Lord forgive ye, girl, fer bringing such grief upon your good sister," said Mrs. Jones grimly.

"Oh, Mrs. Jones, what is the matter with her? Has she taken poison, do you think? She has been in a great deal of trouble to-night!" cried Hannah, in dismay.

"No, it's worse than pi'sen. Hannah, you send that ere raping and staring nigger right away directly; this ain't no place, no longer, for no men-folks to be in, even s'posin they is nothin' but nigger cre-turs."

Hannah raised her eyes to the speaker. A look of intelligence passed between the two women. The old dame nodded her head knowingly, and then Hannah gently laid Nora back upon her pillow, for she seemed at ease again now, and went to the old man and said:

"Uncle Jovial, you had better go home now. Aunt Dinah will be anxious about you, you know."

"Yes, honey, I knows it, and I was only awaitin' to see if I could be of any more use," replied the old man, meekly rising to obey.

The snow had ceased to fall, the sky was perfectly clear, and the stars were shining brightly. Hannah felt glad of

this for the old man's sake, as she closed the door behind him.

But Nora demanded her instant attention. That sufferer was in a paroxysm of agony stronger than any that had yet preceded it.

There was a night of extreme illness, deadly peril, and fearful anxiety in the hut.

But the next morning, just as the sun arose above the opposite heights of Brudenell, flooded all the cloudless heaven and the snow-clad earth with light and glory, a new life also arose in that humble hut upon the hill, and Hannah Wort held a new-born infant boy in her arms.

The miserable young mother lay back upon her pillow—death impressed upon the sunken features, the ashen complexion, and the fixed eyes.

"Oh, what a blessing if this child could die!" cried Hannah, in a piercing voice that reached even the failing sense of the dying girl.

There was an instant change. It was like the sudden flaring up of an expiring light. Down came the stony eyes melting with tenderness and kindling with light. All the features were softened and illumined.

Those who have watched the dying are familiar with these sudden re-kindlings of life. She spoke in tones of infinite sweetness:

"Oh, do not say so, Hannah! Do not grudge the poor little thing his life! Everything else has been taken from him, Hannah!—father, mother, name, inheritance, and all! Leave him his little life: it has been dearly purchased! Hold him down to me, Hannah; I will give him one kiss, if no one ever kisses him again."

"Nora, my poor darling, you know that I will love your boy, and work for him, and take care of him, if he lives; only I thought it was better if it pleased God that he should go home to the Savior," said Hannah, as she held the infant down to receive his mother's kiss.

"God love you, poor, poor baby!" said Nora, putting up her feeble hands, and bringing the little face close to her lips. "He will live, Hannah! Oh, I prayed all through the dreadful night that he might live, and the Lord has answered my prayer," she added, as she resigned the child once more to her sister's care.

Then folding her hands over her heart, and lifting her eyes towards heaven with a look of sweet solemnity, and

in a voice so deep, bell-like, and beautiful that it scarcely seemed a human one, she said:

"Out of the Depths have I called to Thee, and Thou hast heard my voice."

And with these sublime words upon her lips she once more dropped away into sleep, stupor, or exhaustion—for it is difficult to define the conditions produced in the dying by the rising and falling of the waves of life when the tide is ebbing away. The beautiful eyes did not close, but rolled themselves up under their lids; the sweet lips fell apart, and the pearly teeth grew dry.

Presently Nora began to revive and Hannah knelt at her side to catch the whispered words.

"I am dying, Hannah," she spoke softly and slow. "My boy came in with the rising sun, and I shall go out with its setting."

"No, no, my darling—you are much better than you were. I do not see why you should die!" wept Hannah.

"But I do; I am not better, Hannah—I have only floated back. I am always floating backward and forward, towards life and towards death; only every time I float towards death I go farther away, and I shall float out with the day."

Hannah was too much moved to trust herself to speak.

"Sister," said Nora, in a fainter voice, "I have one last wish."

"What is it, my own darling?"

"To see poor, poor Herman once more before I die."

"To forgive him! Yes, I suppose that will be right, though very hard," sighed the elder girl.

"No, not to forgive him, Hannah—for he has never willingly injured me, poor boy; but to lay my hand upon his head, and look into his eyes, and assure him with my dying breath that I know he was not to blame; for I do know it, Hannah."

"Oh, Nora, what faith!" cried the sister.

The dying girl, who, to use her own words, was floating away again, scarcely heard this exclamation, for she murmured on in a lower tone, like the receding voice of the wind:

"For if I do not have a chance of saying this to him, Hannah—if he is left to suppose I went down to the grave believing him to be treacherous—it will utterly break his heart, Hannah; for I know him, poor fellow—he is as sensitive as—as—any—" She was gone again out of reach.

Hannah watched the change that slowly grew over her beautiful face: saw the grayness of death creep over it—

saw its muscles stiffen into stone—saw the lovely eyeballs roll upward out of sight—and the sweet lips drawn away from the glistening teeth.

While she thus watched she heard a sound behind her. She turned in time to see the door pushed open, and Herman Brudenell—pale, wild, haggard, with matted hair, and blood-shot eyes, and shuddering frame—tottered into the room.

CHAPTER XI

HERMAN'S STORY

HANNAH arose, met the intruder, took his hand, led him to the bed of death and silently pointed to the ghastly form of Nora.

He gazed with horror on the sunken features, gray complexion, up-turned eyes, and parted lips of the once beautiful girl.

"Hannah, how is this—dying?" he whispered huskily.

"Dying," replied the woman solemnly.

"So best," he whispered, in a choking voice.

"So best," she echoed, as she drew away to the distant window. "So best, as death is better than dishonor. But you! Oh, you villain! oh, you heartless, shameless villain! to pass yourself off for a single man and win her love and deceive her with a false marriage!"

"Hannah! hear me!" cried the young man, in a voice of anguish.

"Dog! ask the judge and jury to hear you when you are brought to trial for your crime! For do you think that I am a-going to let that girl go down to her grave in undeserved reproach? No, you wretch! not to save from ruin you and your fine sisters and high mother, and all your proud, shameful race! No, you devil! if there is law in the land, you shall be dragged to jail like a thief and exposed in court to answer for your bigamy; and all the world shall hear that you are a felon and she an honest girl who thought herself your wife when she gave you her love!"

"Hannah, Hannah, prosecute, expose me if you like! I am so miserable that I care not what becomes of me or mine. The earth is crumbling under my feet! do you think I care for trifles? Denounce, but hear me! Heaven knows I did not willingly deceive poor Nora! I was myself deceived!

If she believed herself to be my wife, I as fully believed myself to be her husband."

"You lie!" exclaimed this rude child of nature, who knew no fine word for falsehood.

"Oh, it is natural you should rail at me! But, Hannah, my sharp, sharp grief makes me insensible to mere stinging words. Yet if you would let me, I could tell you the combination of circumstances that deceived us both!" replied Herman, with the patience of one who, having suffered the extreme power of torture, could feel no new wound.

"Tell me, then!" snapped Hannah harshly and incredulously.

He leaned against the window-frame and whispered:

"I shall not survive Nora long; I feel that I shall not; I have not taken food or drink, or rested under a roof, since I heard that news, Hannah. Well, to explain—I was very young when I first met her—"

"Met who?" savagely demanded Hannah.

"My first wife. She was the only child and heiress of a retired Jew-tradesman. Her beauty fascinated an imbecile old nobleman, who, having insulted the daughter with 'liberal' proposals, that were scornfully rejected, tempted the father with 'honorable' ones, which were eagerly accepted. The old Jew, in his ambition to become father-in-law to the old earl, forgot his religious prejudices and coaxed his daughter to sacrifice herself. And thus Berenice D'Israeli became Countess of Hurstmonceaux. The old peer survived his foolish marriage but six months, and died leaving his widow penniless, his debts having swamped even her marriage portion. His entailed estates went to the heir-at-law, a distant relation—"

"What in the name of Heaven do you think I care for your countesses! I want to know what excuse you can give for your base deception of my sister," fiercely interrupted Hannah.

"I am coming to that. It was in the second year of the Countess Hurstmonceaux's widowhood that I met her at Brighton. Oh, Hannah, it is not in vanity; but in palliation of my offense that I tell you she loved me first. And when a widow loves a single man, in nine cases out of ten she will make him marry her. She hunted me down, ran me to earth—"

"Oh, you wretch! to say such things of a lady!" exclaimed the woman, with indignation.

"It is true, Hannah, and in this awful hour, with that

ghastly form before me, truth and not false delicacy must prevail. I say then that the Countess of Hurstmonceaux hunted me down and ran me to earth, but all in such feminine fashion that I scarcely knew I was hunted. I was flattered by her preference, grateful for her kindness and proud of the prospect of carrying off from all competitors the most beautiful among the Brighton belles; but all this would not have tempted me to offer her my hand, for I did not love her, Hannah."

"What did tempt you then?" inquired the woman.

"Pity; I saw that she loved me passionately, and—I proposed to her."

"Coxcomb! do you think she would have broken her heart if you hadn't?"

"Yes, Hannah, to tell the truth, I did think so then; I was but a boy, you know; and I had that fatal weakness of which I told you—that which dreaded to inflict pain and delighted to impart joy. So I asked her to marry me. But the penniless Countess of Hurstmonceaux was the sole heiress of the wealthy old Jew, Jacob D'Israeli. And he had set his mind upon her marrying a gouty marquis, and thus taking one step higher in the peerage; so of course he would not listen to my proposal, and he threatened to disinherit his daughter if she married me. Then we did what so many others in similar circumstances do—we married privately. Soon after this I was summoned home to take possession of my estates. So I left England; but not until I had discovered the utter unworthiness of the siren whom I was so weak as to make my wife. I did not reproach the woman, but when I sailed from Liverpool it was with the resolution never to return."

"Well, sir! even supposing you were drawn into a foolish marriage with an artful woman, and had a good excuse for deserting her, was that any reason why you should have committed the crime of marrying Nora?" cried the woman fiercely.

"Hannah, it was not until after I had read an account of a railway collision in which it was stated that the Countess of Hurstmonceaux was among the killed that I proposed for Nora. Oh, Hannah, as the Lord in heaven hears me, I believed myself to be a free, single man, a widower, when I married Nora! My only fault was too great haste. I believed Nora to be my lawful wife until the unexpected arrival of the Countess of Hurstmonceaux, who had been falsely reported among the killed."

"If this is so," said Hannah, beginning to relent, "perhaps after all you are more to be pitied than blamed."

"Thank you, thank you, Hannah, for saying that! But tell me, does she believe that I willfully deceived her? Yet why should I ask? She must think so! appearances are so strong against me," he sadly reflected.

"But she does not believe it; her last prayer was that she might see you once more before she died, to tell you that she knew you were not to blame," wept Hannah.

"Bless her! bless her!" exclaimed the young man.

Hannah, whose eyes had never, during this interview, left the face of Nora, now murmured:

"She is reviving again; will you see her now?"

Herman humbly bowed his head and both approached the bed.

That power—what is it?—awe?—that power which subdues the wildest passions in the presence of death, calmed the grief of Herman as he stood over Nora.

She was too far gone for any strong human emotion; but her pale, rigid face softened and brightened as she recognized him, and she tried to extend her hand towards him.

He saw and gently took it, and stooped low to hear the sacred words her dying lips were trying to pronounce.

"Poor, poor boy; don't grieve so bitterly; it wasn't your fault," she murmured.

"Oh, Nora, your gentle spirit may forgive me, but I never can forgive myself for the reckless haste that has wrought all this ruin!" groaned Herman, sinking on his knees and burying his face on the counterpane, overwhelmed by grief and remorse for the great, unintentional wrong he had done; and by the impossibility of explaining the cause of his fatal mistake to this poor girl whose minutes were now numbered.

Softly and tremblingly the dying hand arose, fluttered a moment like a white dove, and then dropped in blessing on his head.

"May the Lord give the peace that he only can bestow; may the Lord pity you, comfort you, bless you and save you forever, Herman, poor Herman!"

A few minutes longer her hand rested on his head, and then she removed it and murmured:

"Now leave me for a little while; I wish to speak to my sister."

Herman arose and went out of the hut, where he gave way to the pent-up storm of grief that could not be vented by the awful bed of death.

Nora then beckoned Hannah, who opproached and stooped low to catch her words.

"Sister, you would not refuse to grant my dying prayers, would you?"

'Oh, no, no, Nora!" wept the woman.

"Then promise me to forgive poor Herman the wrong that he has done us; he did not mean to do it, Hannah."

"I know he did not, love; he explained it all to me. The first wife was a bad woman who took him in. He thought she had been killed in a railway collision, when he married you, and he never found out his mistake until she followed him home."

"I knew there was something of that sort; but I did not know what. Now, Hannah, promise me not to breathe a word to any human being of his second marriage with me; it would ruin him, you know, Hannah; for no one would believe but that he knew his first wife was living all the time. Will you promise me this, Hannah?"

Even though she spoke with great difficulty, Hannah did not answer until she repeated the question.

Then with a sob and a gulp the elder sister said:

"Keep silence, and let people reproach your memory, Nora? How can I do that?"

"Can reproach reach me—there?" she asked, raising her hand towards heaven.

"But your child, Nora; for his sake his mother's memory should be vindicated!"

"At the expense of making his father out a felon? No, Hannah, no; people will soon forget he ever had a mother. He will only be known as Hannah Worth's nephew, and she is everywhere respected. Promise me, Hannah."

"Nora, I dare not."

"Sister, I am dying; you cannot refuse the prayer of the dying."

Hannah was silent.

"Promise me! promise me! promise me! while my ears can yet take in your voice!" Nora's words fell fainter and fainter; she was failing fast.

"Oh, Heaven, I promise you, Nora—the Lord forgive me for it!" wept Hannah.

"The Lord bless you for it, Hannah." Her voice sunk into murmurs and the cold shades of death crept over her face again; but rallying her fast failing strength she gasped:

"My boy, quick! Oh, quick, Hannah!"

Hannah lifted the babe from his nest and held him low to meet his mother's last kiss.

"There, now, lay him on my arm, Hannah, close to my left side, and draw my hand over him; I would feel him near me to the very last."

With trembling fingers the poor woman obeyed.

And the dying mother held her child to her heart, and raised her glazing eyes full of the agony of human love to Heaven, and prayed:

"O pitiful Lord, look down in mercy on this poor, poor babe! Take him under thy care!" And with this prayer she sank into insensibility.

Hannah flew to the door and beckoned Herman. He came in, the living image of despair. And both went and stood by the bed. They dared not break the sacred spell by speech. They gazed upon her in silent awe.

Her face was gray and rigid; her eyes were still and stony; her breath and pulse were stopped. Was she gone? No, for suddenly upon that face of death a great light dawned, irradiating it with angelic beauty and glory; and once more with awful solemnity deep bell-like tones tolled forth the notes,

> "Out of the depths have I called to Thee
> And Thou hast heard my voice."

And with these holy words upon her lips the gentle spirit of Nora Worth was gone.

For some time Hannah Worth and Herman Brudenell remained standing by the bedside, and gazing in awful silence upon the beautiful clay extended before them upon which the spirit in parting had left the impress of its last earthly smile!

Then the bitter grief of the bereaved woman burst through all outward restraints, and she threw herself upon the bed and clasped the dead body of her sister to her breast, and broke into a tempest of tears and sobs and lamentations.

At length the tempest of Hannah's grief raged itself into temporary rest. She arose, composed the form of her sister, and turned and laid her hand upon the shoulder of Herman, saying calmly:

"It is all over. Go, young gentleman, and wrestle with your sorrow and your remorse, as you may. Such wrestlings will be the only punishment your rashness will receive in this world! Be free of dread from me. She left you her forgiveness as a legacy, and you are sacred from my pursuit. Go, and leave me with my dead."

Herman dropped upon his knees beside the bed of death, took the cold hand of Nora between his own, and bowed his head upon it for a little while in penitential homage, and then arose and silently left the hut.

After he had gone, Hannah remained for a few minutes standing where he had left her, gazing in silent anguish upon the dark eyes of Nora, now glazed in death, and then, with reverential tenderness, she pressed down the white lids, closing them until the light of the resurrection morning should open them again.

While engaged in this holy duty, Hannah was interrupted by the re-entrance of Herman.

He came in tottering, as if under the influence of intoxication; but we all know that excessive sorrow takes away the strength and senses as surely as intoxication does. There is such a state as being drunken with grief when we have drained the bitter cup dry!

"Hannah," he faltered, "there are some things which should be remembered even in this awful hour."

The sorrowing woman, her fingers still softly pressing down her sister's eyelids, looked up in mute inquiry.

"Your necessities and—Nora's child must be provided for. Will you give me some writing materials?" And the speaker dropped, as if totally prostrated, into a chair by the table.

With some difficulty Hannah sought and found an old inkstand, a stumpy pen, and a scrap of paper. It was the best she could do. Stationery was scarce in the poor hut. She laid them on the table before Herman. And with a trembling hand he wrote out a check upon the local bank and put it in her hand, saying:

"This sum will provide for the boy, and set you and Gray up in some little business. You had better marry and go to the West, taking the child with you. Be a mother to the orphan, Hannah, for he will never know another parent. And now shake hands and say good-by, for we shall never meet again in this world."

Too thoroughly bewildered with grief to comprehend the purport of his words and acts, Hannah mechanically received the check and returned the pressure of the hand with which it was given. Then the miserable man turned and left the house.

CHAPTER XII

Ishmael and Claudia

Herman Brudenell vanished without a trace. In the course of time, his mother and sisters removed to their home in Washington. Berenice, Countess of Hurstmonceaux, his deserted wife, returned, broken-hearted, to her estates in England. After several years, Brudenell Hall became the home of the Middleton family. Ishmael, the worse than orphaned child of an erroneous marriage, grew up a strangely silent and conscientious boy in the care of the self-sacrificing Hannah. Mr. Middleton had been a professor of languages in one of the Southern universities; and by his salary had supported and educated a large family of sons and daughters until the death of a distant relative enriched him with the inheritance of a large funded property.

He immediately resigned his position in the university, and—as he did not wish to commit himself hastily to a fixed abode in any particular neighborhood by the purchase of an estate—he leased the whole ready-made establishment at Brudenell Hall, all furnished and officered as it was. There he conveyed his wife and ten children—that is, five girls and five boys, ranging from the age of one year up to fifteen years of age. Added to these was the motherless daughter of his deceased sister, Beatrice Merlin, who had been the wife of the chief-justice of the Supreme Court of the State.

Claudia Merlin had been confided to the care of her uncle and aunt in preference to being sent to a boarding school during her father's absence on official duty at the capital.

Mr. and Mrs. Middleton had found, on coming to Brudenell Hall, that there was no proper school in the neighborhood to which they could send their sons and daughters. They had besides a strong prejudice in favor of educating their children under their own eyes. Mr. Middleton, in his capacity of professor, had seen too much of the temptations of college life to be willing to trust his boys too early to its dangers. And as for sending the girls away from home, Mrs. Middleton would not hear of it for an instant.

After grappling with the difficulty for a while, they conquered it by concluding to engage a graduate of the university as tutor, to ground young people in what are called the

fundamental parts of an English education, together with the classics and mathematics; and also to employ an accomplished lady to instruct them in music and drawing. This school was always under the immediate supervision of the master and mistress of the house. One or the other was almost always present in the schoolroom. And even if this had not been so, the strictest propriety must have been preserved; for the governess was a discreet woman, nearly fifty years of age; and the tutor, though but twenty-five, was the gravest of all grave young men.

The classroom was arranged in a spare back parlor on the first floor—a spacious apartment whose windows looked out upon the near shrubberies and the distant woods. Here on the right hand were seated the five boys under their tutor; and on the left were gathered the girls under their governess. But when a class was called up for recitation, before the tutor, boys and girls engaged in the same studies, and in the same stage of progress stood up together, that their minds might be stimulated by mutual emulation.

Often Mrs. Middleton occupied a seat in an arm-chair near one of the pleasant windows overlooking the shrubberies, and employed herself with some fine needlework while superintending the school. Sometimes, also, Mr. Middleton came in with his book or paper, and occasionally, from force of habit, he would take a classbook and hear a recitation. It was to keep his hand in, he said, lest some unexpected turn of the wheel of fortune should send him back to his old profession again.

Thus, this was in all respects a family school.

But when the neighbors became acquainted with its admirable working, they begged as a favor the privilege of sending their children as day pupils; and Mr. Middleton, in his cordial kindness, agreed to receive the new pupils; but only on condition that their tuition fees should be paid to augment the salaries of the tutor and the governess, as he—Mr. Middleton—did not wish, and would not receive, a profit from the school.

Among the newcomers were the sons of Commodore Burghe. Like the other new pupils, they were only day scholars. For bad conduct they had once been warned away from the school; but had been pardoned and received back at the earnest entreaty of their father.

Into this pleasant family schoolroom, on the first Monday in April, young Ishmael Worth was introduced. His con-

scientious character and conduct had won him a place in the most select and exclusive little school in the State.

Ishmael was now thirteen years of age, a tall, slender boy, with a broad full forehead, large prominent blue eyes, a straight well-shaped nose, full, sweet, smiling lips, thin, wasted-looking cheeks, a round chin and fair complexion. His hands and feet were small and symmetrical, but roughened with hard usage. He was perfectly clean and neat in his appearance. His thin, pale face was as delicately fair as any lady's; his flaxen hair was parted at the left side and brushed away from his big forehead; his coarse linen was as white as snow, and his coarser homespun blue cloth jacket and trousers were spotless; his shoes were also clean.

Altogether, Nora's son was a pleasing lad to look upon as he stood smilingly but modestly, hat in hand, at the schoolroom door, to which he had been brought by Jovial.

The pupils were all assembled—the boys gathered around their tutor on the right, the girls hovered about their governess on the left.

Mr. and Mrs. Middleton were both present, sitting near a pleasant window that the mild spring morning had invited them to open. They were both expecting Ishmael, and both arose to meet him.

Mrs. Middleton silently shook his hand.

Mr. Middleton presented him to the school, saying:

"Young gentlemen, this is your new companion, Master Ishmael Worth, as worthy a youth as it has ever been my pleasure to know. I hope you will all make him welcome among you."

There was an instant and mysterious putting together of heads and buzzing of voices among the pupils.

"Walter, come here," said Mr. Middleton.

A youth of about fifteen years of age arose and approached.

"Ishmael, this is my eldest son, Walter. I hope you two may be good friends. Walter, take Ishmael to a seat beside you; and when the recreation hour comes, make him well acquainted with your companions. Mind, Walter, I commit him to your charge."

Walter Middleton smiled, shook hands with Ishmael, and led him away to share his own double desk.

Mr. Middleton then called the school to order and opened the exercises with the reading of the Scripture and prayer.

This over, he came to Ishmael and laid an elementary

geography before him, with the first lesson marked out on it, saying:

"There, my lad; commit this to memory as soon as you can, and then take your book up for recitation to Mr. Green. He will hear you singly for some time until you overtake the first class, which I am sure you will do very soon; it will depend upon yourself how soon."

And with these kind words Mr. Middleton left the room.

How happy was Ishmael! The schoolroom seemed an elysium! It is true that this was no ordinary schoolroom; but one of the pleasantest places of the kind to be imagined; and very different from the small, dark, poor hut. Ishmael was delighted with its snow-white walls, its polished oak floor, its clear open windows with their outlook upon the blue sky and the green trees and variegated shrubs. He was pleased with his shining mahogany desk, with neat little compartments for slate, books, pen, pencils, ink, etc. He was in love with his new book with its gayly colored maps and pictures and the wonders revealed to him in its lessons. He soon left off reveling in the sights and sounds of the cheerful schoolroom to devote himself to his books. To him study was not a task, it was an all-absorbing rapture. His thirsty intellect drank up the knowledge in that book as eagerly as ever parched lips quaffed cold water. He soon mastered the first easy lesson, and would have gone up immediately for recitation, only that Mr. Green was engaged with a class. But Ishmael could not stop; he went on to the second lesson and then to the third, and had committed the three to memory before Mr. Green was disengaged. Then he went up to recite. At the end of the first lesson Mr. Green praised his accuracy and began to mark the second.

"If you please, sir, I have got that into my head, and also the third one," said Ishmael, interrupting him.

"What! do you mean to say that you have committed three of these lessons to memory?" inquired the surprised tutor.

"Yes, sir, while I was waiting for you to be at leisure."

"Extraordinary! Well, I will see if you can recite them," said Mr. Green, opening the book.

Ishmael was perfect in his recitation.

All schoolmasters delight in quick and intelligent pupils; but Mr. Green especially did so; for he had a true vocation for his profession. He smiled radiantly upon Ishmael as he asked:

"Do you think, now, you can take three of these ordinary lessons for one every day?"

"Oh, yes, sir; if it would not be too much trouble for you to hear me," answered our boy.

"It will be a real pleasure; I shall feel an interest in seeing how fast a bright and willing lad like yourself can get on. Now, then, put away your geography, and bring me the Universal History that you will find in your desk."

In joy, Ishmael went back to his seat, lifted the lid of his desk, and found in the inside a row of books, a large slate, a copy-book, pens, ink, and pencils, all neatly arranged.

"Am I to use these?" he inquired of Walter Middleton.

"Oh, yes; they are all yours; my mother put them all in there for you this morning. You will find your name written on every one of them," replied the youth.

What treasures Ishmael had! He could scarcely believe in his wealth and happiness! He selected tthe Universal History, and took it up to the tutor, who, in consideration of his pupil's capacity and desire, set him a very long lesson.

In an hour Ishmael had mastered this task also, and taken it up to his teacher.

His third book that morning was Murray's English Grammar.

"I do not think I shall set you a lesson of more than the ordinary length this time, Ishmael. I cannot allow you to devour grammar in such large quantities as you have taken of geography and history at a meal. For, grammar requires to be digested as well as swallowed; in other words, it needs to be understood as well as remembered," said Mr. Green, as he marked the lesson for his pupil.

Ishmael smiled as he went back to his seat.

To ordinary boys the study of grammar is very dry work. Not so to Ishmael. For his rare, fine, intellectual mind the analysis of language had a strange fascination. He soon conquered the difficulties of his initiatory lesson in this science, and recited it to the perfect satisfaction of his teacher.

And then the morning's lessons were all over.

This had been a forenoon of varied pleasures to Ishmael. The gates of the Temple of Knowledge had been thrown open to him. All three of his studies had charmed him: the marvelous description of the earth's surface, the wonderful history of the human race, the curious analysis of language—each had in its turn delighted him. And now came the recreation hour to refresh him.

The girls all went to walk on the lawn in front of the house.

The boys all went into the shrubberies in the rear; and the day pupils began to open their dinner baskets.

Ishmael took a piece of bread from his pocket. That was to be his dinner.

But presently a servant came out of the house and spoke to Walter Middleton; and Walter called our boy, saying:

"Come, Ishmael; my father has sent for you."

Ishmael put his piece of bread in his pocket and accompanied the youth into the house and to the dining-room, where a plain, substantial dinner of roast mutton, vegetables, and pudding was provided for the children of the family.

"You are to dine with my children every day, Ishmael," said Mr. Middleton, in those tones of calm authority that admitted of no appeal from their decision.

Ishmael took the chair that was pointed out to him, and did full justice to the nourishing food placed before him.

When dinner was over the boys had another hour's recreation in the grounds, and then they returned to the school-room for afternoon exercises. These were very properly of a lighter nature than those of the morning—being only penmanship, elocution, and drawing.

At six o'clock the school was dismissed. And Ishmael went home, enchanted with his new life, but wondering where little Claudia could be; he had not seen her that day. And thus ended his first day at school.

When he reached the hut Hannah had supper on the table.

"Well, Ishmael, how did you get on?" she asked.

"Oh, Aunt Hannah, I have had such a happy day!" exclaimed the boy. And thereupon he commenced and poured upon her in a torrent of words a description of the school-room, the teachers, the studies, the dinner, the recreations, and, in short, the history of his whole day's experiences.

"And so you are charmed?" said Hannah.

"Oh, aunt, so much!" smiled the boy.

"Hope it may last, that's all! for I never yet saw the lad that liked school after the first novelty wore off," observed the woman.

The next morning Ishmael awoke with the dawn, and sprang from his pallet in the loft as a lark from its nest in the tree.

He hurried downstairs to help Hannah with the morning work before he should prepare for school.

He cut wood, and brought water enough to last through the day, and then ate his frugal breakfast, and set off for school.

He arrived there early—almost too early, for none of the day pupils had come, and there was no one in the schoolroom but the young Middletons and Claudia Merlin.

She was sitting in her seat, with her desk open before her, and her black ringleted head half buried in it. But as soon as she heard the door open she glanced up, and seeing Ishmael, shut down the desk and flew to meet him.

"I am so glad you come to school, Ishmael! I wasn't here yesterday, because I had a cold; but I knew you were! And oh! how nice you do look. Indeed, if I did not know better, I should take you to be the young gentleman, and those Burghes to be workman's sons!" she said, as she held his hand, and looked approvingly upon his smooth, light hair, his fair, broad forehead, clear, blue eyes, and delicate features; and upon his erect figure and neat dress.

"Thank you, miss," answered Ishmael, with boyish embarrassment.

"Come here, Bee, and look at him," said Miss Merlin, addressing some unknown little party, who did not at once obey the behest.

With a reddening cheek, Ishmael gently essayed to pass to his seat; but the imperious little lady held fast his hand, as, with a more peremptory tone, she said:

"Stop! I want Bee to see you! Come here, Bee, this instant, and look at Ishmael!"

This time a little golden-haired, fair-faced girl came from the group of children collected at the window, and stood before Claudia.

"There, now, Bee, look at the new pupil! Does he look like a common boy—a poor laborer's son?"

The little girl addressed as Bee was evidently afraid to disobey Claudia and ashamed to obey her. She therefore stood in embarrassment.

"Look at him, can't you? he won't bite you!" said Miss Claudia.

Ishmael felt reassured by the very shyness of the little new acquaintance that was being forced upon him, and he said, very gently:

"I will not frighten you, little girl; I am not a rude boy."

"I know you will not; it is not that," murmured the little maiden, encouraged by the sweet voice, and stealing a glance at the gentle, intellectual countenance of our lad.

"There, now, does he look like a laborer's son?" inquired Claudia.

"No," murmured Bee.

"But he is, for all that! He is the son of—of— I forget but some relation of Hannah Worth, the weaver. Who was your father, Ishmael? I never heard—or if I did I have forgotten. Who was he?"

Ishmael's face grew crimson. Yet he could not have told because he did not know, why this question caused his brow to burn as though it had been smitten by a red-hot iron.

"Who was your father, I ask you, Ishmael?" persisted the imperious little girl.

"I do not remember my father, Miss Claudia," answered the boy, in a low, half-stifled voice.

"And now you have hurt his feelings, Claudia; let him alone," whispered the fair child, in a low voice, as the tears of a vague but deep sympathy, felt but not understood, arose to her eyes.

Before another word could be said Mrs. Middleton entered the room.

"Ah, Bee, so you are making acquaintance with your new schoolmate! This is my oldest daughter, Miss Beatrice Ishmael. We call her Bee, because it is the abbreviation of Beatrice, and because she is such a busy, helpful little lady," she said, as she shook hands with the boy and patted the little girl on the head.

The entrance of the teachers and the day pupils broke up this little group; the children took their seats and the school was opened, as before, with prayer. This morning the tutor led the exercises. Mr. Middleton was absent on business. This day passed much as the previous one, except that at its close there was Claudia to shake hands with Ishmael; to tell him that he was a bright, intelligent boy, and that she was proud of him; and all with the air of a princess rewarding some deserving peasant.

CHAPTER XIII

ISHMAEL AND CLAUDIA

THE first of August, the decisive day, arrived. It was to be a fête day for the whole neighborhood—that quiet neighborhood, where fêtes, indeed, were so unusual as to make a great sensation when they did occur. There was to be the examination in the forenoon, followed by the distribution of prizes in the afternoon, and a dance in the evening. "The public" were invited to attend in the morning and afternoon,

and the parents, friends, and guardians of the pupils were invited to remain for the dinner and ball in the evening. All the young people were on the qui vive for this festival; and their elders were not much less excited.

Everywhere they were preparing dresses as well as lessons.

Poor Hannah Worth, whose circumstances were much improved since she had been seamstress in general to Mrs. Middleton's large family, had strained every nerve to procure Ishmael a genteel suit of clothes for this occasion. And she had succeeded. And this summer morning saw Ishmael arrayed, for the first time in his life, in a neat, well-fitting dress suit of light gray cassimere, made by the Baymouth tailor. Hannah was proud of her nephew, and Ishmael was pleased with himself. He was indeed a handsome youth, as he stood smiling there for the inspection of his aunt. Every vestige of ill health had left him, but left him with a delicacy, refinement, and elegance in his person, manners, and speech very rare in any youth, rarer still in youth of his humble grade. But all this was of the soul.

"You will do, Ishmael—you will do very well indeed!" said Hannah, as she drew the boy to her bosom and kissed him with blended feeings of affection, admiration, and remorse. Yes, remorse; for Hannah remembered how often, in his feeble infancy, she had wished him dead, and had been impatient for his death.

"I hope you will do yourself credit to-day, Ishmael," she said, as she released him from her embrace.

"I shall try to do you credit, Aunt Hannah," replied the smiling youth, as he set off gayly for the fête at the school.

It was a splendid morning, but promised to be a sultry day.

When he reached Brudenell Hall he found the young ladies and gentlemen of the school, about twenty in all, assembled on the front lawn before the house. The young gentlemen in their holiday suits were sauntering lazily about among the parterres and shrubberies. The young ladies in their white muslin dresses and pink sashes were grouped under the shade of that grove of flowering locusts that stood near the house—the same grove that had sheltered some of them on the night of the fire.

As Ishmael came up the flagged walk leading to the house Claudia saw him and called out:

"Come here, Ishmael, and let us look at you!"

The youth, blushing with the consciousness of his new clothes, and the criticisms they would be sure to provoke

from his honored but exasperating little patroness, advanced to the group of white-robed girls.

Claudia, with her glittering black ringlets, her rich crimson bloom, and glorious dark eyes, was brilliantly beautiful, and at fifteen looked quite a young woman, while Ishmael at sixteen seemed still a boy.

Her manner, too, was that of a young lady towards a mere lad.

She took him by the hand, and looked at him from head to foot, and turned him around; and then, with a triumphant smile, appealed to her companions, exclaiming:

"Look at him now! Isn't he really elegant in his new clothes? Light gray becomes him—his complexion is so fair and clear! There isn't another boy in the neighborhood that wouldn't look as yellow as a dandelion in gray! Isn't he handsome, now?"

This was a very severe ordeal for Ishmael. The young ladies had all gathered around Caudia, and were examining her favorite. Ishmael felt his face burn until it seemed as if the very tips of his ears would take fire.

"Isn't he handsome, now, Bee?" pursued the relentless Claudia, appealing to her cousin.

Beatrice was blushing in intense sympathy with the blushing youth.

"I say, isn't he handsome, Bee?" persevered the implacable critic, turning him around for her cousin's closer inspection.

"Yes! he is a very handsome dog! I wonder you do not get a collar and chain for him, for fear he should run away, or someone should steal him from you, Claudia!" suddenly exclaimed the distressed girl, bursting into indignant tears.

"Consternation! what is the matter now?" inquired the heiress, dropping her victim, from whom general attention was now diverted.

"What is the matter, Bee? what is the matter?" inquired all the young ladies, gathering around the excited girl.

Beatrice could only sob forth the words:

"Nothing, only Claudia vexes me."

"Jealous little imp!" laughed Miss Merlin.

"I am not jealous, I am only vexed," sobbed Beatrice.

"What at? what at?" was the general question.

But Beatrice only answered by tears and sobs. This gentlest of all gentle creatures was in a passion! It was unprecedented; it was wonderful and alarming!

"I should really like to know what is the matter with you, you foolish child! Why are you so angry with me? It is

very unkind!" said Miss Merlin, feeling, she knew not why, a little ashamed.

"I would not be angry with you if you would treat him properly, like a young gentleman, and not like a dog! You treat him for all the world as you treat Fido," said this little lady of so few years, speaking with an effort of moral courage that distressed her more than her companions could have guessed, as she turned and walked away.

Ishmael stepped after her. There were moments when the boy's soul arose above all the embarrassments incident to his age and condition.

He stepped after her, and taking her hand, and pressing it affectionately, said:

"Thank you, Bee! Thank you, dear, dearest, Bee! It was bravely done!"

She turned her tearful, smiling face towards the youth, and replied:

"But do not blame Claudia. She means well always; but, she is—"

"What is she?" inquired the youth anxiously; for there was no book in his collection that he studied with so much interest as Claudia. There was no branch of knowledge that he wished so earnestly to be throughly acquainted with as with the nature of Claudia.

"What is she?" he again eagerly inquired.

"She is blind, where you are concerned."

"I think so too," murmured Ishmael, as he pressed the hand of his little friend and left her.

Was Ishmael's allegiance to his "elect lady" turned aside? Ah, no! Claudia might misunderstand, humilate, and wound him; but she was still "his own star," the star of destiny.

Later in the day, when Walter and Ishmael came up toward a group of the young ladies, Alfred Burghe, who hated Ishmael for his popularity and success, lay in wait to humiliate him. As the two friends came up Alfred drew away with an expression of disgust upon his face, saying:

"Oh, if that fellow is to join our circle, I shall feel obliged to leave it. It is degrading enough to be forced to mix with such rubbish in the schoolroom, without having to associate with him in the drawing-room."

"What do you mean by that, sir?" demanded Miss Merlin, flashing upon him the lightning of her eyes, before Ishmael had drawn near enough to overhear the words of Alfred.

"I mean that fellow is not fit company for me."

"No; Heavens knows that he is not!" exclaimed Claudia pointedly.

"Never mind, Miss Merlin; do not be angry with me; the beaten have a right to cry out," said Ishmael, who had now come up, and stood smiling among them, totally unconscious of the humiliation that was in store for him.

"I am not angry; I am never angry with such dull pups; though I find it necessary to punish them sometimes," replied Claudia haughtily.

"I say he is not fit company for me; and when I say that. I mean to say that he is no fit company for any young gentleman, much less for any young lady!" exclaimed Alfred.

Ishmael looked on with perfect good humor, thinking only that his poverty was sneered at, and feeling immeasurably above the possibility of humiliation or displeasure upon that account.

Claudia thought as he did, that only his lowly fortunes had exposed him to contempt; so putting her delicate white gloved hand in that of Ishmael, she said:

"Ishmael Worth is my partner in the first dance; do you dare to hint that the youth I dance with is not proper company for any gentleman, or any lady, either?"

"No, I don't hint it; I speak it out in plain words; he is not only not fit company for any gentleman or lady, but he is not even fit company for any decent negro!"

Ishmael, strong in conscious worth, and believing the words of Alfred to be only reckless assertion, senseless abuse, laughed aloud with sincere, boyish mirthfulness at its absurdity.

But Claudia's cheeks grew crimson, and her eyes flashed—bad signs these for the keeping of her temper towards "dull pups."

"He is honest, truthful, intelligent, industrious, and polite. These are qualities which, of course, unfit him for such society as yours, Mr. Burghe; but I do not see why they should unfit him for that of ladies and gentlemen," said Claudia severely.

"He is a ——," brutally exclaimed Alfred, using a coarse word, at which all the young girls started and recoiled, as if each had received a wound, while all the boys exclaimed simultaneously:

"Oh, fie!" or "Oh, Alf, how could you say such a thing!" "For shame!"

As for Walter Middleton, he had collared the young miscreant before the word was fairly out of his mouth. But an

instant's reflection caused the young gentleman to release the culprit, with the words:

"My father's house and the presence of these young ladies protect you for the present, sir."

Ishmael stood alone, in the center of a shocked and recoiling circle of young girls; so stunned by the epithet that had been hurled at him that he scarcely yet understood its meaning or felt that he was wounded.

"What did he say, Walter?" he inquired, appealing to his friend.

Walter Middleton put his strong arm around the slender and elegant form of Ishmael, and held him firmly; but whether in a close embrace or light restraint, or both, it was hard to decide, as he answered:

"He says what will be very difficult for him to explain, when he shall be called to account to-morrow morning; but what, it is quite needless to repeat."

"I say he is a ——! His mother was never married! and no one on earth knows who his father was—or if he ever had a father!" roared Alfred brutally.

Walter's arms closed convulsively upon Ishmael. There was good reason. The boy had given one spasmodic bound forward, as if he would have throttled his adversary on the spot; but the restraining arm of Walter Middleton held him back; his face was pale as marble; a cold sweat had burst upon his brow; he was trembling in every limb as he gasped:

"Walter, this cannot be true! Oh, say it is not true!"

"True! no! I believe it is as false—as false as that young villain's heart! and nothing can be falser than that!" indignantly exclaimed young Middleton.

"It is! it is true! The whole country knows it is true!" vociferated Alfred. "And if anybody here doubts it, let them ask old Hannah Worth if her nephew isn't a ——"

"Leave the room, sir!" exclaimed Walter, interrupting him before he could add another word. "Your language and manners are so offensive as to render your presence entirely inadmissible here! Leave the room instantly!"

"I won't!" said Alfred stoutly.

Walter was unwilling to release Ishmael from the tight, half-friendly, half-masterly embrace in which he held him; else, perhaps, he might himself have ejected the offender. As it was, he grimly repeated his demand.

"Will you leave the room?"

"No!" replied Alfred.

"James, do me the favor to ring the bell."

James Middleton rang a peal that brought old Jovial quickly to the room.

"Jovial, will you go and ask your master if he will be kind enough to come here; his presence is very much needed," said Walter.

Jovial bowed and withdrew.

"I shall go and complain to my father of the insults I have received!" said Alfred, turning to leave the room; for he had evidently no wish to meet the impending interview with Mr. Middleton.

"I anticipated that you would reconsider your resolution of remaining here!" laughed Walter, as he let this sarcasm off after his retreating foe.

He had scarcely disappeared through one door before Mr. Middleton entered at another.

"What is all this about, Walter?" he inquired, approaching the group of panic-stricken girls and wondering boys.

"Some new rudeness of Alfred Burghe, father; but he has just taken himself off, for which I thank him; so there is no use in saying more upon the subject for the present," replied Walter.

"There is no use, in any case, to disturb the harmony of a festive evening, my son; all complaints may well be deferred until the morning, when I shall be ready to hear them," repied Mr. Middleton, smiling, and never suspecting how serious the offense of Alfred Burghe had been.

"And now," he continued, turning towards the band, "strike up the music, professor! The summer evenings are short, and the young people must make the most of this one. Walter, my son, you are to open the ball with your cousin."

"Thank you very much, uncle; thank you, Walter, but my hand is engaged for this set to Ishmael Worth; none but the winner of the first prize for me!" said Claudia gayly, veiling the kindness that prompted her to favor the mortified youth under a sportive assumption of vanity.

"Very well, then, where is the hero?" said Mr. Middleton.

But Ishmael had suddenly disappeared, and was nowhere to be found.

"Where is he, Walter? He was standing by you," said Claudia.

"I had my arm around him to prevent mischief, and I released him only an instant since; but he seems to have slipped away," answered Walter, in surprise.

"He has gone after Alfred! and there will be mischief

done; and no one could blame Ishmael if there was!" exclaimed Claudia.

"It was young Worth, then, that Burghe assailed?" inquired Mr. Middleton.

"Yes, uncle! and if Mr. Burghe is permitted to come to the house after his conduct this evening, I really shall feel compelled to write to my father, and request him to remove me, for I cannot, indeed, indeed, I cannot expose myself to the shock of hearing such language as he has dared to use in my presence this evening!" said Claudia excitedly.

"Compose yourself, my dear girl; he will not trouble us after this evening; he does not return to school after the vacation; he goes to West Point," said her uncle.

CHAPTER XIV

AT HIS MOTHER'S GRAVE

GIDDY, faint, reeling from the shock he had received, Ishmael tottered from the gay and lighted rooms and sought the darkness and the coolness of the night without.

He leaned against the great elm tree on the lawn, and wiped the beaded sweat from his brow.

"It is not true," he said. "I know it is not true! Walter said it was false; and I would stake my soul that it is. My dear mother is an angel in heaven; I am certain of that; for I have seen her in my dreams ever since I can remember. But yet—but yet—why did they all recoil from me? Even she—even Claudia Merlin shrank from me as from something unclean and contaminating, when Alfred called me that name. If they had not thought there was some truth in the charge, would they all have recoiled from me so? Would she have shrunk from me as if I had the plague? Oh, no! Oh, no! And then Aunt Hannah! Why does she act so very strangely when I ask her about my parents? If I ask her about my father she answers me with a blow. If I ask her about my mother, she answers that my mother was a saint on earth and in now an angel in heaven. Oh! I do not need to be told that; I know it already. I always knew it of my dear mother. But to only know it no longer satisfies me; I must have the means of proving it. And to-night, yes, to-night, Aunt Hannah, before either of us sleep, you shall tell me all that you know of my angel mother and my unknown father."

And having recovered his severely shaken strength, Ishmael left the grounds of Brudenell Hall and struck into the narrow foot-path leading down the heights and through the valley to the Hut hill.

Hannah was seated alone, enjoying her solitary cup of tea, when Ishmael opened the door and entered.

"What, my lad, have you come back so early? I did not think the ball would have been over before twelve or one o'clock, and it is not ten yet; but I suppose, being a school ball, it broke up early. Did you get any premiums? How many did you get?" inquired Hannah, heaping question upon question without waiting for reply, as was her frequent custom.

Ishmael drew a chair to the other side of the table and sank heavily into it.

"You are tired, poor fellow, and no wonder! I dare say, for all the good things you got at the ball, that a cup of tea will do you no harm," said Hannah, pouring out and handing him one.

Ishmael took it wearily and set it by his side.

"And now tell me about the premiums," continued his aunt.

"I got the first premium in belles-lettres, aunt; and it was Hallam's 'History of Literature.' And I got the first in languages, which was Irving's 'Life of Washington'—two very valuable works, Aunt Hannah, that will be treasures to me all my life."

"Why do you sigh so heavily, my boy? are you so tired as all that? But one would think, as well as you love books, those fine ones would liven you up. Where are they? Let me see them."

"I left them at the school, Aunt Hannah. I will go and fetch them to-morrow."

"There's that sigh again! What is the matter with you, child? Are you growing lazy? Who got the gold medal?"

"It wasn't a medal, Aunt Hannah. Mr. Middleton wanted to give something useful as well as costly for the first prize; and he said a medal was of no earthly use to anybody, so he made the prize a gold watch and chain."

"But who got it?"

"I did, aunt; there it is," said Ishmael, taking the jewel from his neck and laying it on the table.

"Oh! what a beautiful watch and chain! and all pure gold! real yellow guinea gold! This must be worth almost a hundred dollars! Oh, Ishmael, we never had anything like

this in the house before. I am so much afraid somebody might break in and steal it!" exclaimed Hannah, her admiration and delight at sight of the rich prize immediately modified by the cares and fears that attend the possession of riches.

Ishmael did not reply; but Hannah went on reveling in the sight of the costly bauble, until, happening to look up, she saw that Ishmael, instead of drinking his tea, sat with his head dropped upon his hand in sorrowful abstraction.

"There you are again! There is no satisfying some people. One would think you would be as happy as a king with all your prizes. But there you are moping. What is the matter with you, boy? Why don't you drink your tea?"

"Aunt Hannah, you drink your own tea, and when you have done it I will have a talk with you."

"Is it anything particular?"

"Very particular, Aunt Hannah; but I will not enter upon the subject now," said Ishmael, raising his cup to his lips to prevent further questionings.

But when the tea was over and the table cleared away, Ishmael took the hand of his aunt and drew her towards the door, saying:

"Aunt Hannah, I want you to go with me to my mother's grave. It will not hurt you to do so; the night is beautiful, clear and dry, and there is no dew."

Wondering at the deep gravity of his words and manner, Hannah allowed him to draw her out of the house and up the hill behind it to Nora's grave at the foot of the old oak tree. It was a fine, bright, starlight night, and the rough headstone, rudely fashioned and set up by the professor, gleamed whitely out from the long shadowy grass.

Ishmael sank down upon the ground beside the grave, put his arms around the headstone, and for a space bowed his head.

Hannah seated herself upon a fragment of rock near him. But both remained silent for a few minutes.

It was Hannah who broke the spell.

"Ishmael, my dear," she said, "why have you drawn me out here, and what have you to say to me of such a serious nature that is can be uttered only here?"

But Ishmael still was silent—being bowed down with thought or grief.

Reflect a moment, reader: At this very instant of time his enemy—he who had plunged him in this grief—was in the midst of all the light and music of the ball at Brudenell

Hall; but could not enjoy himself because the stings of conscience irritated him, and because the frowns of Claudia Merlin chilled and depressed him.

Ishmael was out in the comparative darkness and silence of night and nature. Yet he, too, had his light and music—light and music more in harmony with his mood than any artificial substitutes could be; he had the holy light of myriads of stars shining down upon him, and the music of myriads of tiny insects sounding around him,

This subdued light and music of nature's evening worship suited well the saddened yet exalted mood of Ishmael. He knew not what was before him, what sort of revelation he was about to invoke, but he knew that, whatever it might be, it should not shake his resolve, "to deal justly, love mercy, and walk humbly" with his God.

Hannah spoke again:

"Ishmael, will you answer me—why have you brought me here? What have you to say to me so serious as to demand this grave for the place of its hearing?"

"Aunt Hannah," began the boy, "what I have to say to you is even more solemn than your words impart."

"Ishmael, you frighten me."

"No, no; there is no cause of alarm."

"Why don't you tell me what has brought us here, then?"

"I am about to do so," said Ishmael solemnly. "Aunt Hannah, you have often told me that she whose remains lie below us was a saint on earth and is an angel in heaven!"

"Yes, Ishmael. I have told you so, and I have told you truly."

"Aunt Hannah, three years ago I asked you who was my father. You replied by a blow. Well, I was but a boy then, and so of course you must have thought that that was the most judicious answer you could give. But now, Aunt Hannah, I am a young man, and I demand of you, Who was my father?"

"Ishmael, I cannot tell you!"

With a sharp cry of anguish the youth sprang up; but governing his strong excitement he subsided to his seat, only gasping out the question:

"In the name of Heaven, why can you not?"

Hannah's violent sobs were the only answer.

"Aunt Hannah! I know this much—that your name is Hannah Worth; that my dear mother was your sister; that her name was Nora Worth; and that mine is Ishmael Worth! Therefore I know that I bear yours and my

mother's maiden name! I always took it for granted that my father belonged to the same family; that he was a relative, perhaps a cousin of my mother, and that he bore the same name, and therefore did not in marrying my mother give her a new one. That was what I always thought, Aunt Hannah; was I right?"

Hannah sobbed on in silence.

"Aunt Hannah! by my mother's grave, I adjure you to answer me! Was I right?"

"No, Ishmael, you were not!" wailed Hannah.

"Then I do not bear my father's name?"

"No."

"But only my poor mother's?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Heaven! how is that?"

"Because you have no legal right to your father's; because the only name to which you have any legal right is your poor, wronged mother's!"

With a groan that seemed to rend body and soul asunder, Ishmael threw himself upon his mother's grave.

"You said she was an angel! And I know that she was!" he cried, as soon as he had recovered the power of speech.

"I said truly, and you know the truth!" wept Hannah.

"How, then, is it, that, I, her son, cannot bear my father's name?"

"Ishmael, your mother was the victim of a false marriage!"

Ishmael sprang up from his recumbent posture, and gazed at his aunt with a fierceness that pierced through the darkness.

"And so pure and proud was she, that the discovery broke her heart!"

Ishmael threw himself once more upon the grave, and clasping the mound in his arms, burst into a passionate flood of tears, and wept long and bitterly. And, after a while, through this shower of tears, came forth in gusty sobs these words:

"Oh, mother! Oh, poor, young, wronged, and broken-hearted mother! sleep in peace; for your son lives to vindicate you. Yes, if he has been spared, it was for this purpose—to honor, to vindicate, to avenge you!" And after these words his voice was again lost and drowned in tears and sobs.

Hannah kneeled down beside him, took his hand, and tried to raise him, saying:

"Ishmael, my love, get up, dear! There was no wrong

done, no crime committed, nothing to avenge. Your father was as guiltless as your mother, my boy; there was no sin; nothing from first to last but great misfortune. Come into the house, my Ishmael, and I will tell you all about it."

"Yes; tell me all! tell me every particular; have no more concealments from me!" cried Ishmael, rising to follow his aunt.

"I will not; but oh, my boy! gladly would I have kept the sorrowful story concealed from you forever, but that I know from what I have seen of you to-night, that some rude tongue has told you of your misfortune—and told you wrong besides!" said Hannah, as they re-entered the hut.

They sat down beside the small wood fire that the chill night made not unwelcome, even in August. Hannah sat in her old arm-chair, and Ishmael on the three-legged stool at her feet, with his head in her lap. And there, with her hand caressing his light brown hair, Hannah told him the story of his mother's love and suffering and death.

At some parts of her story his tears gushed forth in floods, and his sobs shook his whole frame. Then Hannah would be forced to pause in her narrative, until he had regained composure enough to listen to the sequel.

Hannah told him all; every particular with which the reader is already acquainted; suppressing nothing but the name of his miserable father.

At the close of the sad story both remained silent for some time; the deathly stillness of the room broken only by Ishmael's deep sighs. At last, however, he spoke:

"Aunt Hannah, still you have not told me the name of him my poor mother loved so fatally."

"Ishmael, I have told you that I cannot; and now I will tell you why I cannot."

And then Hannah related the promise that she had made to her dying sister, never to expose the unhappy but guiltless author of her death.

"Poor mother! poor, young, broken-hearted mother! She was not much older than I am now when she died—was she, Aunt Hannah?"

"Scarcely two years older, my dear."

"So young!" sobbed Ishmael, dropping his head again upon Hannah's knee, and bursting into a tempest of grief.

She allowed the storm to subside a little, and then said:

"Now, my Ishmael, I wish you would tell me what it was that sent you home so early from the party, and in such a sorrowful mood. I knew, of course, that something must

have been said to you about your birth. What was said, and who said it?"

"Oh, Aunt Hannah! it was in the very height of my triumph that I was struck down! I was not proud, Heaven knows, that I should have had such a fall! I was not proud—I was feeling rather sad upon account of Walter's having missed the prize; and I was thinking how hard it was in this world that nobody could enjoy a triumph without someone else suffering a mortification. I was thinking and feeling so, as I tell you, until Walter came up and talked me out of my gloom. And then all my young companions were doing me honor in their way, when—"

Ishmael's voice was choked for a moment; but with an effort he regained his composure and continued, though in a broken and faltering voice:

"Alfred Burghe left the group, saying that I was not a proper companion for young ladies and gentlemen. And when—she—Miss Merlin, angrily demanded why I was not, he— Oh! Aunt Hannah!" Ishmael suddenly ceased and dropped his face into his hands.

"Compose yourself, my dear boy, and go on," said the weaver.

"He said that I was a— No! I cannot speak the word! I cannot!"

"A young villain! If ever I get my hands on him, I will give him as good a broomsticking as ever a bad boy had in this world! He lied, Ishmael! You are not what he called you. You are legitimate on your mother's side, because she believed herself to be a lawful wife. You bear her name, and you could lawfully inherit her property, if she had left any. Tell them that when they insult you!" exclaimed Hannah indignantly.

"Ah! Aunt Hannah, they would not believe it without proof!"

"True! too true! and we cannot prove it, merely because your mother bound me by a promise never to expose the bigamy of your father. Oh, Ishmael, to shield him, what a wrong she did to herself and to you!" wept the woman.

"Oh, Aunt Hannah do not blame her! she was so good!" said this loyal son. "I can bear reproach for myself, but I will not bear it for her! Say anything you like to me, dear Aunt Hannah! but never say a word against her!"

"But, poor boy! how will you bear the sure reproach of birth that you are bound to hear from others? Ah, Ishmael, you must try to fortify your mind, my dear, to bear much

unjust shame in this world. Ishmael, the brighter the sun shines the blacker the shadow falls. The greater your success in the world, the bitterer will be this shame! See, my boy, it was now in the hour of your youthful triumph that this reproach was first cast in your face! The envious are very mean, my boy. Ah, how will you answer their cruel reproaches!"

"I will tell you, Aunt Hannah! Let them say what they like of me; I will try to bear with them patiently; but if any man or boy utters one word of reproach against my dear mother—" The boy ceased to speak, but his face grew livid.

"Now, now, what would you do?" exclaimed Hannah, in alarm.

"Make him recant his words, or silence him forever!"

"Oh, Ishmael! Ishmael! you frighten me nearly to death! Good Heaven, men are dreadful creatures! They never receive any injury but they must needs think of slaying! Oh, how I wish you had been a girl! Boys are a dreadful trial and terror to a lone woman! Oh, Ishmael! promise me you won't do anything violent!" exclaimed Hannah, beside herself with terror.

"I cannot, Aunt Hannah! For I should be sure to break such a promise if the occasion offered. Oh, Aunt Hannah! you don't know all my mother is to me! You don't! You think because she died the very day that I was born that I cannot know anything about her and cannot love her; but I tell you, Aunt Hannah, I know her well! and I love her much."

CHAPTER XV

LOVE AND GENIUS

Early the next morning Ishmael walked over to Brudenell Hall with the threefold purpose of making an apology for his sudden departure from the ball; taking leave of the family for the holidays; and bringing home the books he had won as prizes.

As he approached the house he saw Mr. Middleton walking on the lawn.

That gentleman immediately advanced to meet Ishmael, holding out his hand, and saying, with even more than his usual kindness of manner:

"Good-morning, my dear boy; you quite distinguished yourself yesterday; I congratulate you."

"I thank you, sir; I thank you very much; but I fear that I was guilty of great rudeness in leaving the party so abruptly last night; but I hope, when you hear my explanation, you will excuse me, sir," said Ishmael, deeply flushing.

Mr. Middleton kindly drew the boy's arm within his own, and walked him away from the house down a shady avenue of elms, and when they had got quite out of hearing of any chance listeners, he said gravely:

"My boy, I have heard the facts from Walter, and I do not require any explanation from you. I hold you entirely blameless in the affair, Ishmael, and I can only express my deep regret that you should have received an insult while under my roof. I trust, Ishmael, that time and reflection will convince young Burghe of his great error, and that the day may come when he himself will seek you to make a voluntary apology for his exceeding rudeness."

Ishmael did not reply; his eyes were fixed upon the ground, and his very forehead was crimson. Mr. Middleton saw all this, divined his thoughts, and so gently continued:

"You will be troubled no more with Alfred Burghe or his weak brother; both boys left this morning; Alfred goes to the Military Academy at West Point; Ben to the Naval School at Annapolis; so you will be quite free from annoyance by them."

Still Ishmael hung his head, and Mr. Middleton added:

"And now, my young friend, do not let the recollection of that scapegrace's words trouble you in the slightest degree. Let me assure you, that no one who knows you, and whose good opinion is worth having, will ever esteem your personal merits less, upon account of—" Mr. Middleton hesitated for a moment, and then said, very softly—"your poor, unhappy mother."

Ishmael sprang aside, and groaned as if he had received a stab; and then with a rush of emotion, and in an impassioned manner, he exclaimed:

"My poor, unhappy mother! Oh, sir, you have used the right words! She was very poor and very unhappy! most unhappy; but not weak! not foolish! not guilty! Oh, believe it, sir! believe it, Mr. Middleton! For if you were to doubt it, I think my spirit would indeed be broken! My poor, young mother, who went down to the grave when she was but little older than her son is now, was a pure, good, honorable woman. She was, sir! she was! and I will prove it to the world some day, if Heaven only lets me live to do

it! Say you believe it, Mr. Middleton! Oh, say you believe it!"

"I do believe it, my boy," replied Mr. Middleton, entirely carried away by the powerful magnetism of Ishmael's eager, earnest, impassioned manner.

"Heaven reward you, sir," sighed the youth; subsiding into the modest calmness of his usual deportment.

"How do you intend to employ your holidays, Ishmael?" inquired his friend.

"By continuing my studies at home, sir," replied the youth.

"I thought so! Well, so that you do not overwork yourself, you are right to keep them up. These very long vacations are made for the benefit of the careless and idle, and not for the earnest and industrious. But, Ishmael, that little cot of yours is not the best place for your purpose; studies can scarcely be pursued favorably where household work is going on constantly; so I think you had better come here every day as usual, and read in the schoolroom. Mr. Brown will be gone certainly; but I shall be at home, and ready to render you any assistance."

"Oh, sir, how shall I thank you?" joyfully began Ishmael.

"By just making the best use of your opportunities to improve yourself, my lad," smiled his friend, patting him on the shoulder.

"But, sir—in the vacation—it will give you trouble—"

"It will afford me pleasure, Ishmael! I hope you can take my word for that?"

"Oh, Mr. Middleton! Indeed you—how can I ever prove myself grateful enough?"

"By simply getting on as fast as you can, boy! as I told you before. And let me tell you now, that there is good reason why you should now make the best possible use of your time; it may be short."

"Sir?" questioned Ishmael in perplexity and vague alarm.

"I should rather have said it must be short! I will explain. You know Mr. Herman Brudenell?"

"Mr.—Herman—Brudenell," repeated the unconscious son, slowly and thoughtfully; then, as a flash of intelligence lighted up his face, he exclaimed: "Oh, yes, sir, I know who you mean; the young gentleman who owns Brudenell Hall, and who is now traveling in Europe."

"Yes! but he is not such a very young gentleman now; he must be between thirty-five and forty years of age. Well, my boy, you know, of course, that he is my landlord. When I rented this place, I took it by the year, and at a very low

price, as the especial condition that I should leave it at six months' warning. Ishmael, I have received that warning this morning. I must vacate the premises on the first of next February."

Ishmael looked confounded. "Must vacate these premises the first of next February," he echoed, in a very dreary voice.

"Yes, my lad; but don't look so utterly sorrowful; we shall not go out of the world, or even out of the State; perhaps not out of the county, Ishmael; and our next residence will be a permanent one; I shall purchase, and not rent, next time; and I shall not lose sight of your interests; besides the parting is six months off yet; so look up, my boy. Bless me, if I had known it was going to depress you in this way, I should have delayed the communication as long as possible; in fact, my only motive for making it now, is to give a good reason why you should make the most of your time while we remain here."

"Oh, sir, I will; believe me, I will; but I am so sorry you are ever going to leave us," said the boy, with emotion.

"Thank you, Ishmael; I shall not forget you; and in the meantime, Mr. Brudenell, who is coming back to the Hall, and is a gentleman of great means and beneficence, cannot fail to be interested in you; indeed, I myself will mention you to him. And now come in, my boy, and take luncheon with us. We breakfasted very early this morning in order to get the teachers off in time for the Baltimore boat; and so we require an early luncheon," said Mr. Middleton, as he walked his young friend off to the house.

Mrs. Middleton and all her children and Claudia were already seated around the table in the pleasant morning room, where all the windows were open, admitting the free summer breezes, the perfume of flowers, and the songs of birds.

The young people started up and rushed towards Ishmael; for their sympathies were with him; and all began speaking at once.

"Oh, Ishmael! why did you disappoint me of dancing with the best scholar in the school?" asked Claudia.

"What did you run away for?" demanded James.

"I wouldn't have gone for him," said John.

"Oh, Ishmael, It was such a pleasant party," said little Fanny.

"Alf was a bad boy," said Baby Sue.

"It was very impolite in you to run away and leave me when I was your partner in the first quadrille! I do not

see why you should have disappointed me for anything that fellow could have said or done!" exclaimed Claudia.

As all were speaking at once it was quite impossible to answer either, so Ishmael looked in embarrassment from one to the other.

Bee had not spoken; she was spreading butter on thin slices of bread for her baby sisters; but now, seeing Ishmael's perplexity, she whispered to her mother:

"Call them off, mamma dear; they mean well; but it must hurt his feelings to be reminded of last night."

Mrs. Middleton thought so too; so she arose and went forward and offered Ishmael her hand, saying:

"Good-morning, my boy; I am glad to see you; draw up your chair to the table. Children, take your places. Mr. Middleton, we have been waiting for you."

"I know you have, my dear, but cold lunch don't grow colder by standing; if it does, so much the better this warm weather.

"I have been taking a walk with my young friend here," said the gentleman, as he took his seat.

Ishmael followed his example, but not before he had quietly shaken hands with Beatrice.

At luncheon Mr. Middleton spoke of his plan, that Ishmael should come every day during holidays to pursue his studies as usual in the schoolroom.

"You know he cannot read to any advantage in the little room where Hannah is always at work," explained Mr. Middleton.

"Oh, no! certainly not," agreed his wife.

The family were all pleased that Ishmael was still to come.

"But, my boy, I think you had better not set in again until Monday. A few days of mental rest is absolutely necessary after the hard reading of the last few months. So I enjoin you not to open a classbook before next Monday."

As Mrs. Middleton emphatically seconded this move, our boy gave his promise to refrain, and after luncheon was over he went and got his books, took a respectful leave of his friends and returned home.

"Aunty," he said, as he entered the hut, where he found Hannah down on her knees scrubbing the floor, "what do you think? Mr. Middleton and his family are going away from the Hall. They have had warning to quit at the end of six months."

"Ah," said Hannah indifferently, going on with her work.

"Yes; they leave on the first of February, and the owner of the place, young Mr. Herman Brudenell, you know, is coming on to live there for good!"

"Ah!" cried Hannah, no longer indifferently, but excitedly, as she left off scrubbing, and fixed her keen black eyes upon the boy.

"Yes, indeed! and Mr. Midledton—oh, he is so kind—says he will mention me to Mr. Herman Brudenell."

"Oh! will he?" exclaimed Hannah, between her teeth.

"Yes; and—Mr. Herman Brudenell is a very kind gentleman, is he not?"

"Very," muttered Hannah.

"You were very well acquainted with him, were you not?"

"Yes."

"You answer so shortly, Aunt Hannah. Didn't you like young Mr. Herman Brudenell?"

"I—don't know whether I did or not; but, Ishmael, I can't scrub and talk at the same time. Go out and chop me some wood; and then go and dig some potatoes, and beets, and cut a cabbage—a white-head! and then go to the spring and bring a bucket of water; and make haste; but don't talk to me any more, if you can help it."

Ishmael went out immediately to obey, and as the sound of his ax was heard Hannah muttered to herself:

"Herman Brudenell coming back to the Hall to live!" And she fell into deep thought.

Ishmael was intelligent enough to divine that his Aunt Hannah did not wish to talk of Mr. Herman Brudenell.

"Some old grudge, connected with their relations as landlord and tenant, I suppose," said Ishmael to himself. And as he chopped away at the wood he resolved to avoid in her presence the objectionable name.

The subject was not mentioned between the aunt and nephew again. Ishmael assisted her in preparing their late afternoon meal of dinner and supper together, and then, when the room was made tidy and Hannah was seated at her evening sewing, Ishmael, for a treat, showed her his prize books; at which Hannah was so pleased, that she went to bed and dreamed that night that Ishmael had risen to the distinction of being a country schoolmaster.

The few days of mental rest that Mr. Middleton had enjoined upon the young student were passed by Ishmael in hard manual labor that did him good. Among his labors, as he had now several valuable books, he fitted up some book shelves over the little low window of his loft, and under

the window he fixed a sloping board, that would serve him for a writing-desk.

CHAPTER XVI

UNDER THE OLD ELM TREE

On Monday morning he resumed his attendance at Brudenell Hall. He was received very kindly by the family, and permitted to go up to the empty schoolroom and take his choice among all the vacant seats, and to make the freest use of the school library, maps, globes, and instruments.

Ishmael moved his own desk up under one of the delightful windows, and there he sat day after day at hard study. He did not trouble Mr. Middleton much; whenever it was possible to do so by any amount of labor and thought, he puzzled out all his problems and got over all his difficulties alone.

He kept up the old school hours; punctually, and exactly at noon, he laid aside his books and went out on the lawn for an hour's recreation before lunch.

There he often met his young friends, and always saw Claudia. It was Miss Merlin's good pleasure to approve and encourage this poor but gifted youth; and she took great credit to herself for her condescension. Although she was younger than Ishmael, yet her tone and manner in addressing him was that of an elder as well as of a superior; and blended the high authority of a young queen with the deep tenderness of a little mother. For instance, when he would come out at noon, she would often beckon him to her side, as she sat in her garden chair, under the shadow of the great elm tree, with a book of poetry or a piece of needle-work in her hands. And when he came, she would make him sit down on the grass at her feet, and she would put her small, white hand on his burning forehead, and look in his face with her beautiful, dark eyes, and murmur softly:

"Poor boy; your head aches; I know it does. You have been sitting under the blazing sun in that south window of the schoolroom, so absorbed in your studies that you forgot to close your shutters."

And she would take a vial of eau-de-cologne from her pocket, pour a portion of it upon a handkerchief, and with her own fair hand bathe his heated brows; at the same time administering a queenly reprimand, or a motherly caution,

as pride or tenderness happened to predominate in her capricious mood.

This royal or maternal manner in this beautiful girl would not have attracted the hearts of most; but Ishmael, at the age of seventeen, was yet too young to feel that haughty pride of full-grown manhood which recoils from the patronage of women, and most of all from that of the woman they love.

Ishmael was intensely happy. This earth was no longer a commonplace world, filled with commonplace beings; it was a paradise peopled with angels.

Did Mr. and Mrs. Middleton fear no harm in the close intimacy of this gifted boy of seventeen and this beautiful girl of sixteen?

Indeed no! They believed the proud heiress looked upon the peasant boy merely as her protégé, her pet, her fine, intelligent dog! they believed Claudia secure in her pride and Ishmael absorbed in his studies. They were three-quarters right, which is as near the correct thing as you can expect imperfect human nature to approach; that is, they were wholly right as to Claudia and half right as to Ishmael. Claudia was secure in her pride; and half of Ishmael's soul—the mental half—was absorbed in his studies; his mind was given to his books; but his heart was devoted to Claudia. And in this double occupation there was no discord, but the most perfect harmony.

But though Claudia, whom he adored, was his watchful patroness, Bee, whom he only loved, was his truest friend. Claudia would warn him against danger; but Bee would silently save him from it. While Claudia would be administering a queenly rebuke to the ardent young student for exposing himself to a sunstroke by reading under the blazing sun in an open south window, Bee, without saying a word, would go quietly into the schoolroom, close the shutters of the sunny windows, and open those of the shady ones, so that the danger might not recur in the afternoon.

In September the school was regularly reopened for the reception of the day pupils. Their parents were warned, however, that this was to be the last term; that the school must necessarily be broken up at Christmas, as the house must be given up on the first of February. The return of the pupils, although they filled the schoolroom during study hours, and made the lawn a livelier scene during recess, did not in the least degree interrupt the intimacy of Ishmael and Claudia. He still sat at her feet beneath the green shadows

of the old elm tree, often reading to her while she worked her crochet; or strumming upon his old guitar an accompaniment to her song.

And so time went on. Autumn faded into winter; the flowers were withered; the grass dried; the woods bare. Miss Merlin no longer sat under the green shadows of the old elm tree; there were no green shadows there; the tree was stripped of its leaves and seemed but the skeleton of itself, and the snow lay around its foot.

The season, far from interrupting the intimacy between the heiress and her favorite, only served to draw them even more closely together. This was the way of it. At the noon recess all the pupils of the school would rush madly out upon the lawn to engage in the rough, healthful, and exciting game of snowballing each other—all except Claudia, who was far too fine a lady to enter into any such rude sport, and Ishmael, whose attendance upon her own presence she would peremptorily demand.

While all the others were running over each other in their haste to get out, Claudia would pass into the empty drawing-room, and seating herself in the deep easy chair, would call to her "gentleman in waiting," saying:

"Come, my young troubadour, bring your guitar and sit down upon this cushion at my feet and play an accompaniment to my song, as I sing and work."

And Ishmael, filled with joy, would fly to obey the royal mandate; and soon seated at the beauty's feet, in the glow of the warm wood fire in the glory of her heavenly presence, he would lose himself in a delicious dream of love and music. No one ever interrupted their tête-à-tête. And Ishmael grew to feel that he belonged to his liege lady; that they were forever inseparate and inseparable. And thus his days passed in one delusive dream of bliss until the time came when he was rudely awakened.

One evening, as usual, he took leave of Claudia. It was a bitter cold evening, and she took off her own crimson Berlin wool scarf and with her own fair hands wound it around Ishmael's neck, and charged him to hasten home, because she knew that influenza would be lying in wait to seize any loitering pedestrian that night.

Ishmael ran home, as happy as it was in the power of man to make him. How blest he felt in the possession of her scarf—her fine, soft, warm scarf, deliciously filled with the aroma of Claudia's own youth, beauty, and sweetness. He felt that he was not quite separated from her while he had

her scarf—her dear scarf, with the warmth and perfume of her own neck yet within its meshes! That night he only unwound it from his throat to fold it and lay it on his pillow that his cheek might rest upon it while he slept—slept the sweetest sleep that ever visited his eyes.

Ah, poor, pale sleeper! this was the last happy night he was destined to have for many weeks and months.

In the morning he arose early as usual to hasten to school and—to Claudia. He wound her gift around his neck and set off at a brisk pace. The weather was still intensely cold; but the winter sky was clear and the sunshine glittered "keen and bright" upon the crisp white snow. Ishmael hurried on and reached Brudenell Hall just in time to see a large fur-covered sleigh, drawn by a pair of fine horses, shoot through the great gates and disappear down the forest road.

A death-like feeling, a strange spasm, as if a hand of ice had clutched his heart, caught away Ishmael's breath at the sight of that vanishing sleigh. He could not rationally account for this feeling; but soon as he recovered his breath he inquired of old Jovial, who stood gazing after the sleigh.

"Who has gone away?"

"Miss Claudia, sir; her pa came after her last night—"

"Claudia—gone!" echoed Ishmael, reeling and supporting himself against the trunk of the bare old elm tree.

"It was most unexpected, sir; mist'ess sat up most all night to see to the packing of her clothes—"

"Gone—gone—Claudia gone!" breathed Ishmael, in a voice despairing, yet so low, that it did not interrupt the easy flow of Jovial's narrative.

"But you see, sir, the judge, he said how he hadn't a day to lose, 'cause he'd have to be at Annapolis to-morrow to open his court—"

"Gone—gone!" wailed Ishmael, dropping his arms.

"And 'pears the judge did write to warn master and mist'ess to get Miss Claudia ready to go this morning; but seems like they never got the letter—"

"Oh, gone!" moaned Ishmael.

—"Anyways, it was all, 'Quick! march!' and away they went. And the word does go around as, after the court term is over, the judge he means to take Miss Claudia over seas to forrin parts to see the world."

After the departure of the Middletons it was currently reported in the neighborhood that the arrival of Mr. Herman Brudenell was daily expected. Hannah became very much

disturbed with an anxiety that was all the more wearing because she could not communicate it to anyone. The idea of remaining in the neighborhood with Mr. Brudenell, and being subjected to the chance of meeting him, was unsupportable to her.

It was in this state of affairs when Reuben Gray returned from long absence, and began eagerly to renew his persuasions, even after all these years for Hannah to become his wife. Under the pressure of circumstances she could not deny him and he took her silence for consent.

"Thank you, Hannah! Then it's a bargain?" he exclaimed.

"But, Reuben! about Ishmael?"

"Lord bless you, Hannah, why, I told you years ago, when the lad was a helpless baby, that he should be as welcome to me as a son of my own; and now, Hannah, at his age, with his larnin', he'll be a perfect treasure to me," said Reuben, brightening up.

"In what manner, Reuben?"

"Why, law, Hannah, you know I never could make any fist of reading, writing, and 'rithmetic; and so the keeping of the farm-books is just the one torment of my life. Little Kitty used to keep them for me before she was married (you know I managed to give the child a bit of schooling); but since she have been gone they haven't been half kept, and if I hadn't a good memory of my own I shouldn't be able to give no account of nothing. Now, Ishmael, you know, could put all the books to rights for me, and keep them to rights."

"If that be so, it will relieve my mind very much, Reuben," replied Hannah.

The appearance of Ishmael's pale face at the door put an end to the conversation for the time being. And Reuben took up his hat and departed.

That evening, after Reuben had bidden them good-night, and departed to the neighbor's house where he slept, Hannah told Ishmael all about her engagement to Gray. And it was with the utmost astonishment the youth learned they were all to go to reside on the plantation of Judge Merlin—Claudia's father! Well! to live so near her house would make his duty to conquer his passion only the more difficult, but he was still resolved to effect his purpose.

Having once given her consent, Hannah would not compromise Reuben's interest with his employer by making any more difficulties or delays. She spent the remainder of that week in packing up the few effects belonging to herself and

Ishmael. The boy himself employed his time in transplanting rose-bushes from the cottage-garden to his mother's grave, and fencing it around with a rude but substantial paling. On Sunday morning Reuben and Hannah were married at the church; and on Monday they were to set out for their new home.

Early on Monday morning Ishmael arose and went out to take leave of his mother's grave; and, kneeling there, he silently renewed his vow to rescue her name from reproach and give it to honor.

Then he returned and joined the traveling party.

Before the cottage door stood Reuben's light wagon, in which were packed the trunks with their wearing apparel, the hamper with their luncheon, and all the little light effects which required care. Into this Gray placed Hannah and Ishmael, taking the driver's seat himself. A heavier wagon behind this one contained all Hannah's household furniture, including her loom and wheel and Ishmael's home-made desk and book-shelf, and in the driver's seat sat the negro man who had come down in attendance upon the overseer.

They journeyed on at a rate as fast as the rather tired horses could be urged to make. When the sun had set it grew dark, very dark in the forest. There was no moon; and although it was a clear, starlight night, yet that did not help them much. They had to drive very slowly and carefully to avoid accidents, and it was indeed midnight when they drove up to the door of Hannah's new home. It was too dark to see more of it than that it was a two-storied white cottage with a vine-clad porch, and that it stood in a garden on the edge of the wood.

CHAPTER XVII

THE NEW HOME

"WELCOME home, Hannah! welcome home, dearest woman! No more hard work now, Hannah! and no more slaving at the everlasting wheel and loom! Nothing to do but your own pretty little house to keep, and your own tidy servant girl to look after! And no more anxiety about the future, Hannah; for you have me to love you and care for you! Ah, dear wife! this is a day I have looked for'ard to through all the gloom and trouble of many years. Thank God, it has come at last, more blessed than I ever hoped it would be,

and I welcome you home, my wife!" said Reuben Gray, as he lifted his companion from the wagon, embraced her, and led her through the gate into the front yard.

"Oh, you dear, good Reuben, what a nice, large house this is! so much better than I had any reason to expect," said Hannah, in surprise and delight.

"You'll like it better still by daylight, my dear," answered Gray.

"How kind you are to me, dear Reuben."

"It shall always be my greatest pleasure to be so, Hannah."

A negro girl at this moment appeared at the door with a light, and the husband and wife entered the house.

Ishmael sprang down from his seat, stretched his cramped limbs, and gazed about him with all the curiosity and interest of a stranger in a strange scene.

The features of the landscape, as dimly discerned by starlight, were simple and grand.

Behind him lay the deep forest from which they had just emerged. On its edge stood the white cottage, surrounded by its garden. Before him lay the open country, sloping down to the banks of a broad river, whose dark waves glimmered in the starlight.

So this was Judge Merlin's estate—and Claudia's birthplace!

"Well, Ishmael, are you waiting for an invitation to enter? Why, you are as welcome as Hannah herself, and you couldn't be more so!" exclaimed the hearty voice of Reuben Gray, as he returned almost immediately after taking Hannah in.

"I know it, Uncle Reuben. You are very good to me; and I do hope to make myself very useful to you," replied the boy.

"You'll be a fortun' to me, lad—an ample fortun' to me! But why don't you go in out of the midnight air? You ain't just as strong as Samson, yet, though you're agwine to be," said Gray cheerily.

The next morning as soon at the meal was over, Ishmael said:

"Now, Uncle Reuben, if you will give me those farm books you were wanting me to arrange, I will make a commencement."

"No, you won't, Ishmael, my lad. You have worked yourself nearly to death this winter and spring, and now, please the Lord, you shall do no more work for a month. So

just get your hat and come with us; I am going to show your aunt over the place."

Ishmael smiled and obeyed. And all three went out together. And oh! with how much pride Reuben displayed the treasures of her little place to his long-loved Hannah. He showed her her cows and pigs and sheep; and her turkeys and geese and hens; and her beehives and garden and orchard.

"And this isn't all, either, Hannah, my dear! We can have as much as we want for family use, of all the rare fruits and vegetables from the greenhouses and hotbeds up at Tanglewood; and, besides that, we have the freedom of the fisheries and the oyster beds, too; so you see, my dear, you will live like any queen! Thank the Lord!" said Reuben, reverently raising his hat.

"And oh, Reuben, to think that you should have saved all this happiness for me, poor, faded, unworthy me!" sighed his wife.

"Why, law, Hannah, who else should I have saved it for but my own dear old sweetheart? I never so much as thought of another."

One of the wisest of our modern philosophers says that we are sure to meet with the right book at the right time. Now whether it were chance, fate, or Providence that filled the scanty shelves of the old escritoire with a few law books, is not known; but it is certain that their presence there decided the career of Ishmael Worth.

As a young babe, whose sole object in life is to feed, pops everything it can get hold of into its mouth, so this youthful aspirant, whose master-passion was the love of learning, read everything he could lay his hands on. Prompted by that intellectual curiosity which ever stimulated him to examine every subject that fell under his notice, Ishmael looked into the law books. They were mere text-books, probably the discarded property of some young student of the Merlin family, who had never got beyond the rudiments of the profession; but had abandoned it as a "dry study."

Ishmael did not find it so, however. The same ardent soul, strong mind, and bright spirit that had found "dry history" an inspiring heroic poem, "dry grammar" a beautiful analysis of language, now found "dry law" the intensely interesting science of human justice. Ishmael read diligently, for the love of his subject!—at first it was only for the love of his subject, but after a few weeks of study he began to read it with a fixed purpose—to become a lawyer. Of

course Ishmael Worth was no longer unconscious of his own great intellectual power; he had measured himself with the best educated youth of the highest rank, and he found himself in mental strength their master. So when he resolved to become a lawyer, he felt a just confidence that he should make a very able one. Of course, with his clear perceptions and profound reflections he saw all the great difficulties in his way; but they did not dismay him. His will was as strong as his intellect, and he knew that, combined, they would work wonders, almost miracles.

Twice a week Reuben Gray went up the river to a little waterside hamlet called Shelton to meet the mail. Reuben's only correspondent was his master, who wrote occasionally to make inquiries or to give orders. The day after his evening out was the regular day for Reuben to go to the post office.

So immediately after breakfast Reuben mounted the white cob which he usually rode and set out for Shelton.

He was gone about two hours, and returned with a most perplexed countenance. Now "the master's" correspondence had always been a great bother to Reuben. It took him a long time to spell out the letters and a longer time to indite the answers. So the arrival of a letter was always sure to unsettle him for a day or two. Still, that fact did not account for the great disturbance of mind in which he reached home and entered the family sitting-room.

"What's the matter, Reuben? Any bad news?" anxiously inquired Hannah.

"N-n-o, not exactly bad news; but a very bad bother," said Gray, sitting down in the big arm-chair and wiping the perspiration from his heated face.

"What is it, Reuben?" pursued Hannah.

"Where's Ishmael?" inquired Gray, without attempting to answer her question.

"Working in the garden of course. But why can't you tell me what's the matter?"

"Botheration is the matter, Hannah, my dear. Just go call Ishmael to me."

Hannah left the house to comply with his request, and Reuben sat and wiped his face and pondered over his perplexities. Reuben had lately grown to rely very much upon Ishmael's judgment, and to appeal to him in all his difficulties. So he looked up in confidence as the youth entered with Hannah.

"What is it, Uncle Reuben?" inquired the boy cheerfully.

"The biggest botheration as ever was, Ishmael, my lad!" answered Gray.

"Well, take a mug of cool cider to refresh yourself, and then tell me all about it," said Ishmael.

Hannah ran and brought the invigorating drink, and after quaffing it Gray drew a long breath and said:

"Why, I've got the botherationest letter from the judge as ever was. He says how he has sent down a lot of books, as will be landed at our landing by the schooner *Canvas Back*, Capt'n Miller; and wants me to take the cart and go and receive them, and carry them up to the house, and ask the housekeeper for the keys of the liber-airy and put them in there," said Reuben, pausing for breath.

"Why, that is not much bother, Uncle Reuben. Let me go and get the books for you," smiled Ishmael.

"Law, it ain't that; for I don't s'pose it's much more trouble to cart books than it is to cart bricks. You didn't hear me out: After I have got the botheration things into the liber-airy, he wants me to unpack them, and also take down the books as is there already, and put the whole lot on 'em in the middle of the floor, and then pick 'em out and 'range 'em all in separate lots, like one would sort vegetables for market, and put each sort all together on a different shelf, and then write all their names in a book, all regular and in exact order! There, now, that's the work as the judge has cut out for me, as well as I can make out his meaning from his hard words and crabbed hand; and I no more fit to do it nor I am to write a sarmon, or build a ship; and if that ain't enough to bother a man's brains I don't know what is, that's all."

"But it is no part of your duty as overseer to act as his librarian," said Ishmael.

"I know it ain't; but, you see, the judge he pays me liberal, and he gives me a fust-rate house and garden, and the liberty of his own orchards and vineyards, and a great many other privileges besides, and he expects me to 'commodate him in turn by doing of little things as isn't exactly in the line of my duty," answered Gray.

"But," demurred Ishmael, "he ought to have known that you were not precisely fitted for this new task he has set you."

"Well, my lad, he didn't; 'cause, you see, the gals as I edicated, you know, they did everything for me as required larning, like writing letters and keeping 'counts; and as for little Kitty, she used to do them beautiful, for Kitty was

real clever; and I do s'pose the judge took it for granted as the work was all my own, and so he thinks I can do this job too. Now, if the parish school wa'n't broke up for the holidays, I might get the schoolmaster to do it for me and pay him for it; but, you see, he is gone North to visit his mother and he won't be back until September, so the mischief knows what I shall do. I thought I'd just ask your advice, Ishmael, because you have got such a wonderful head of your own."

"Thank you, Uncle Reuben. Don't you be the least distressed. I can do what is required to be done, and do it in a manner that shall give satisfaction, too," said Ishmael.

"You! you, my boy! could do that everlasting big botheration of a job?"

"Yes, and do it well, I hope."

"Why, I don't believe the professor himself could!" exclaimed Gray, in incredulous astonishment.

"Nor I, either," laughed Ishmael; "but I know that I can."

"But, my boy, it is such a task!"

"I should like it, of all things, Uncle Reuben! You could not give me a greater treat than the privilege of overhauling all those books and putting them in order and making the catalogue," said the youth eagerly.

And besides he was going to Claudia's house!

Reuben looked more and more astonished as Ishmael went on; but Hannah spoke up:

"You may believe him, Reuben! He is book-mad; and it is my opinion, that when he gets into that musty old library, among the dusty books, he will fancy himself in heaven."

Reuben looked from the serious face of Hannah to the smiling eyes of Ishmael, and inquired doubtfully:

"Is that the truth, my boy?"

"Something very near it, Uncle Reuben," answered Ishmael.

"Very well, my lad," exclaimed the greatly relieved overseer, gleefully slapping his knees, "very well! as sure as you are born, you shall go to your heaven."

CHAPTER XVIII

ISHMAEL IN TANGLEWOOD

THE next morning Ishmael Worth went down to the shore, carrying a spy-glass to look out for the *Canvas Back*.

There was no certainty about the passing of these sailing packets; a dead calm or a head wind might delay them for days and even weeks; but on this occasion there was no disappointment and no delay, the wind had been fair and the little schooner was seen flying before it up the river. Ishmael seated himself upon the shore and drew a book from his pocket to study while he waited for the arrival of the schooner. In less than an hour she dropped anchor opposite the landing, and sent off a large boat laden with boxes, and rowed by four stout seamen. As they reached the sands Ishmael blew a horn to warn Reuben Gray of their arrival.

Three or four times the boat went back and forth between the schooner and the shore, each time bringing a heavy load. By the time the last was brought and deposited upon the beach, Reuben Gray arrived at the spot with his team. The sailors received a small gratuity from Gray and returned to the schooner, which immediately raised anchor and continued her way up the river.

Ishmael, Reuben, and Sam, the teamster, loaded the wagon with the boxes and set out for Tanglewood, Sam driving the team, Ishmael and Reuben walking beside it.

Through all the fertile and highly cultivated fields that lay along the banks of the river they went, until they reached the borders of the forest, where Reuben's cottage stood. They did not pause here, but passed it and entered the forest. What a forest it was! They had scarcely entered it when they became so buried in shade that they might have imagined themselves a thousand miles deep in some primeval wilderness, where never the foot of man had trod. The road along which they went was grass-grown. The trees, which grew to an enormous size and gigantic height, interwove their branches thickly overhead. Sometimes these branches intermingled so low that they grazed the top of the wagon as it passed, while men and horses had to bow their heads.

"Why isn't this road cleared, Uncle Reuben?" inquired Ishmael.

"Because it is as much as a man's place is worth to touch a tree in this forest, Ishmael," replied Reuben.

"But why is that? The near branches of these trees need lopping away from the roadside; we can scarcely get along."

"I know it, Ishmael; but the judge won't have a tree in Tanglewood so much as touched; it is his crotchet."

"True, for you, Marse Gray," spoke up Sam; "last time I trimmed away the branches from the sides of this here road, ole marse threatened if I cut off so much as a twig from one

of the trees again he'd take off a joint of one of my fingers to see how I'd like to be 'trimmed,' he said."

Ishmael laughed and remarked:

"But the road will soon be closed unless the trees are cut away."

"Sartin it will; but he don't care for consequences; he will have his way; that's the reason why he never could keep any overseer but me; there was always such a row about the trees and things, as he always swore they should grow as they had a mind to, in spite of all the overseers in the world. I let him have his own will; it's none of my business to contradict him," said Reuben.

"But what will you do when the road closes, how will you manage to get heavy boxes up to the house?" laughed Ishmael.

"Wheel 'em up in a hand-barrow, I s'pose, and if the road gets too narrow for that, unpack 'em and let the niggers tote the parcels up piece-meal."

Thicker and thicker grew the trees as they penetrated deeper into the forest; more obstructed and difficult became the road. Suddenly, without an instant's warning, they came upon the house, a huge, square building of gray stone, so overgrown with moss, ivy, and creeping vines that scarcely a glimpse of the wall could be seen. Its colors, therefore, blended so well with the forest trees that grew thickly and closely around it, that one could scarcely suspect the existence of a building there.

"Here we are," said Reuben, while Sam dismounted and began to take off the boxes.

The front door opened and a fat negro woman, apparently startled by the arrival of the wagon, made her appearance, asking:

"What de debbil all dis, chillun?"

"Here are some books that are to be put into the library, Aunt Katie, and this young man is to unpack and arrange them," answered the overseer.

"More books: my hebbinly Lord, what ole marse want wid more books, when he nebber here to read dem he has got?" exclaimed the fat woman, raising her hands in dismay.

"That is none of our business, Katie! What we are to do is to obey orders; so, if you please, let us have the keys," replied Gray.

The woman disappeared within the house and remained absent for a few minutes, during which the men lifted the boxes from the wagon.

By the time they had set down the last one Katy reappeared with her heavy bunch of keys and beckoned them to follow her.

Ishmael obeyed, by shouldering a small box and entering the house, while Reuben Gray and Sam took up a heavy one between them and came after.

It was a noble old hall, with its walls hung with family pictures and rusty arms and trophies of the chase; with doors opening on each side into spacious apartments; and with a broad staircase ascending from the center.

The fat old negro housekeeper, waddling along before the men, led them to the back of the hall, and opened a door on the right, admitting them into the library of Tanglewood.

Here the men set down the boxes. And when they had brought them all in, and Sam, under the direction of Gray, had forced off all the tops, laying the contents bare to view, the latter said:

"Now then, Ishmael, we will leave you to go to work and unpack; but don't you get so interested in the work as to disremember dinner time at one o'clock precisely; and be sure you are punctual; because we've got veal and spinnidge."

"Thank you, Uncle Reuben, I will not keep you waiting," replied the youth.

Gray and his assistant departed, and Ishmael was left alone with the wealth of books around him.

It was a noble room; four lofty windows—two on each side—admitting abundance of light and air; at one end was a marble chimney-piece, over which hung a fine picture of Christ disputing with the doctors in the temple; on each side of this chimney-piece were glass cases filled with rare shells, minerals, and other curiosities; all the remaining spaces along the walls and between the windows were filled up with book-cases; various writing tables, reading stands, and easy-chairs occupied the center of the floor.

After a curious glance at this scene, Ishmael went to work at unpacking the boxes. He found his task much easier than he had expected to find it. Each box contained one particular set of books. On the top of one of the boxes he found a large strong blank folio, entitled—"Library Catalogue."

Ishmael took this book and sat down at one of the tables and divided it into twelve portions, writing over each portion the name of the subject to which he proposed to devote it, as "Theology," "Physics," "Jurisprudence," etc. The last portion he headed "Miscellaneous." Next he divided

the empty shelves into similar compartments, and headed each with the corresponding names. Then he began to make a list of the books, taking one set at a time, writing their names in their proper portion of the catalogue and then arranging them in their proper compartment of the library.

Ishmael had just got through with "Theology," and was about to begin to arrange the next set of books in rotation when he bethought himself to look at the timepiece, and seeing that it was after twelve, he hurried back to Woodside to keep his appointment with Reuben.

But he returned in the afternoon and recommenced work, and not only on this day, but for several succeeding days, Ishmael toiled cheerfully at this task. To arrange all these books in perfect order and neatness was to Ishmael a labor of real love; and so when one Saturday afternoon he had completed his task, it was with a feeling half of satisfaction at the results of his labor, half of regret at leaving the scene of it, that he locked up the library, returned the key to Aunt Katie, and took leave of Tanglewood.

Walking home through the forest that evening Ishmael thought well over his future prospects. He had read and mastered all those text-books of law that he had found in the old escritoire of his bedroom; and now he wanted more advanced books on the same subject. Such books he had seen in the library at Tanglewood; and he had been sorely tempted to linger as long as possible there for the sake of reading them: but honest and true in thought and act, he resisted the temptation to appropriate the use of the books, or the time that he felt was not his own.

On this evening, therefore, he meditated upon the means of obtaining the books that he wanted. He was now about eighteen years of age, highly gifted in physical beauty and in moral and intellectual excellence; but he was still as poor as poverty could make him. He worked hard, much harder than many who earned liberal salaries; but he earned nothing absolutely nothing, beyond his board and clothing.

This state of things he felt must not continue longer. It was now nearly nine months since he had left Mr. Middleton's school, and there was no chance of his ever entering another; so now he felt he must turn the education he had received to some better account than merely keeping Reuben Gray's farm books; that he must earn something to support himself and to enable him to go on with his law studies; and he must earn this "something" in this neighborhood, too; for the idea of

leaving poor Reuben with no one to keep his accounts never entered the unselfish mind of Ishmael.

Various plans of action as to how he should contrive to support himself and pursue his studies without leaving the neighborhood suggested themselves to Ishmael. Among the rest, he thought of opening a country school. True, he was very young, too young for so responsible a post; but in every other respect except that of age, he was admirably well qualified for the duty. While he was still meditating upon this subject, he unexpectedly reached the end of his walk and the gate of the cottage.

Reuben and Hannah were standing at the gate. Reuben's left arm was around Hannah, and his right hand held an open letter, over which both their heads were bent. Hannah was helping poor Reuben to spell out its contents.

Ishmael smiled as he greeted them, smiled with his eyes only, as if his sweet bright spirit had looked out in love upon them; and thus it was that Ishmael always met his friends.

"Glad you've come home so soon, Ishmael—glad as ever I can be! Here's another rum go, as ever was!" said Gray, looking up from the letter.

"What is it, Uncle Reuben?"

"Why, it's a sort of notice from the judge. 'Pears like he's gin up his v'y'ge to forrin parts; and 'stead of gwine out yonder for two or three years, he and Miss Merlin be coming down here to spend the summer—leastways, what's left of it," said Gray.

Ishmael's face flushed crimson, and then went deadly white, as he reeled and leaned against the fence for support. Much as he had struggled to conquer his wild passion for the beautiful and high-born heiress, often as he had characterized it as mere boyish folly, or moon-struck madness, closely as he had applied himself to study in the hope of curing his mania, he was overwhelmed by the sudden announcement of her expected return: overwhelmed by a shock of equally blended joy and pain—joy at the prospect of soon meeting her, pain at the thought of the impassable gulf that yawned between them—"so near and yet so far!"

His extreme agitation was not observed by either Reuben or Hannah, whose heads were again bent over the puzzling letter. While he was still in that half-stunned, half-excited and wholly-confused state of feeling, Reuben went slowly on with his explanations:

"'Pears like the judge have got another gov'ment 'point-

ment, or some sich thing, as will keep him here in his natyve land; so he and Miss Claudia, they be a-coming down here to stop till the meeting of Congress in Washington. So he orders me to tell Katie to get the house ready to receive them by the first of next week; and law! this is Saturday! Leastways, that is all me and Hannah can make out'n this here letter, Ishmael; but you take it and read it yourself," said Gray, putting the missive into Ishmael's hands.

With a great effort to recover his self-possession, Ishmael took the letter and read it aloud.

It proved to be just what Reuben and Hannah had made of it, but Ishmael's clear reading rendered the orders much plainer.

"Now, if old Katie won't have to turn her fat body a little faster than she often does, I don't know nothing!" exclaimed Gray, when Ishmael had finished the reading.

"I will go up myself this evening and help her," said Hannah kindly.

"No, you won't, neither, my dear! Old Katie has lots of young maid servants to help her, and she's as jealous as a pet cat of all interference with her affairs. But we will walk over after tea and let her know what's up," said Gray.

After tea, accordingly, Reuben, Hannah, and Ishmael took a pleasant evening stroll through the forest to Tanglewood, and told Katie what was at hand.

"And you'll have to stir round, old woman, and that I tell you, for this is Saturday night, and they may be here on Monday evening," said Gray.

"Law, Marse Reuben, you needn't tell me nuffin 'tall 'bout Marse Judge Merlin! I knows his ways too well; I been too long use to his popping down on us, unexpected, like the Day of Judgment, for me to be unprepared! The house is all in fust-rate order; only wantin' fires to be kindled to correct de damp, and windows to be opened to air de rooms; and time 'nuff for dat o' Monday," grinned old Katie, taking things easy.

"Very well, only see to it! Come, Hannah, let us go home," said Gray.

"But, Uucle Reuben, have you no directions for the coachman to meet the judge at the landing?" inquired Ishmael.

"No, my lad. The judge never comes down by any of these little sailing packets as pass here. He allers comes by the steamboat to Baymouth, and then from there to here by land."

"Then had you not better send the carriage to Baymouth

immediately, that it may be there in time to meet him? It will be more comfortable for the judge and—and Miss—and his daughter to travel in their own easy carriage than in those rough village hacks."

"Well, now, Ishmael, that's a rale good idee, and I'll follow it, and the judge will thank you for it. If he'd took a thought, you see, he'd a-gin me the order to do just that thing. But law! he's took up along of public affairs, as he never thinks of his private comfort, though he is always pleased as possible when anybody thinks of it for him."

"Then, Uncle Ruben, had you not better start Sam with the carriage this evening? It is a very clear night, the roads are excellent, and the horses are fresh; so he could easily reach Baymouth by sunrise, and put up at the 'Planter's Rest,' for Sunday, and wait there for the boat."

"Yes, Ishmael, I think I had better do so; we'll go home now directly and start Sam. He'll be pleased to death! It there's anything that nigger likes it's a journey, particular through the cool of the night; but he'll sleep all day to-morrow to make up for his lost rest," returned Reuben, as they turned to walk back to the cottage.

Sam was found loitering near the front gate. When told what he was to do, he grinned and started with alacrity to put the horses to the carriage and prepare the horse feed to take along with him.

And meanwhile Hannah packed a hamper full of food and drink to solace the traveler on his night journey.

In half an hour from his first notice to go, Sam drove the carriage up to the cottage gate, received his hamper of provisions and his final orders, and departed.

Hannah and Reuben, leaning over the gate, watched him out of sight, and then sat down in front of their cottage door, to enjoy the coolness of the summer evening, and talk of the judge's expected arrival.

Ishmael went up to his room, lighted a candle, and sat down to try to compose his agitated heart and apply his mind to study. But in vain; his eyes wandered over the pages of his book; his mind could not take in the meaning. The thought of Claudia filled his whole soul, absorbed his every faculty to the exclusion of every other idea.

"Oh, this will never, never do! It is weakness, folly, madness! What have I to do with Miss Merlin that she takes possession of my whole being in this manner! I must, I will conquer this passion!" he exclaimed, at last, starting up, throwing aside his book, and pacing the floor.

CHAPTER XIX

CLAUDIA

ISHMAEL applied himself diligently to active outdoor work during the morning and to study during the evening hours.

Thus several days passed. Nothing was heard from Sam, the carriage, or the judge.

Reuben Gray expressed great anxiety—not upon account of the judge, or Miss Merlin, who, he averred, were both capable of taking care of themselves and each other, but on account of Sam and his valuable charge that he feared had in some way or other come to harm.

Ishmael tried to reassure him by declaring his own opinion that all was right, and that Sam was only waiting at Baymouth for the arrival of his master.

Reuben Gray only shook his head and predicted all sorts of misfortunes.

But Ishmael's supposition was proved to be correct, when late Wednesday night, or rather—for it was after midnight—early Thursday morning, the unusual sound of carriage wheels passing the road before the cottage waked up all its inmates, and announced to them the arrival of the judge and his daughter.

Reuben Gray started up and hurried on his clothes.

Ishmael sprang out of bed and looked forth from the window. But the carriage without pausing for a moment rolled on its way to Tanglewood House.

The startled sleepers finding their services not required returned to bed again.

Early that morning while the family were at the breakfast table, Sam made his appearance and formally announced the arrival of the judge and Miss Merlin at Tanglewood.

"How long did you have to wait for them at Baymouth?" inquired Reuben Gray.

"Not a hour, sar. I arrove about sunrise at the 'Planter's,' just as the *Powhatan* was a-steaming up to the wharf; and so I druv on to the wharf to see if de judge and his darter was aboard, and sure nuff dere dey was! And mightily 'stonished was dey to see me and de carriage and de horses; and mightily pleased, too. So de judge he put his darter inter de inside, while I piled on de luggage a-hind and a-top; and so we goes back to de 'Planter's,'" said Sam.

"But what kept you so long at Baymouth?"

"Why, law bless you, de judge, he had wisits to pay in de neighborhood; and having of me an' de carriage dere made it all de more convenienter. O' Monday we went over to a place called de Burrow, and dined long of one Marse Commodore Burghe; and o' Tuesday we went and dined at Brudenell Hall with young Mr. Herman Brudenell."

At this name Hannah started and turned pale; but almost immediately recovered her composure.

Sam continued:

"And o' Wednesday, that is yesterday morning airly, we started for home. We laid by during the heat of the day at Horse-head, and started again late in de arternoon; dat made it one o'clock when we arrove at home last night, or leastways this morning."

"Well, and what brought you down here? Has the judge sent any messages to me?"

"Yes, he have; he want you to come right up to de house and fetch de farm books, so he can see how the 'counts stands."

"Very well; they're all right!" said Reuben confidently, as he arose from the table, put on his hat, took two account-books from the shelf, and went out followed by Sam.

Ishmael as usual went into the garden to work, and tried to keep his thoughts from dwelling upon Claudia.

At dinner-time Gray returned, and Ishmael met him at the table. And Gray could talk of nothing but the improvement, beauty, and the grace of Miss Merlin.

"She is just too beautiful for this world, Hannah," he concluded, after having exhausted all his powers of description upon his subject.

After dinner Ishmael went upstairs to his books, and Hannah took advantage of his absence to say to Gray:

"Reuben, I wish you would never mention Miss Claudia Merlin's name before Ishmael."

"Law! why?" inquired Gray.

"Because I want him to forget her."

"But why so?"

"Oh, Reuben, how dull you are! Well, if I must tell you, he likes her."

"Well, so do I! and so do everyone!" said honest Reuben.

"But he likes her too well! he loves her, Reuben!"

"What! Ishmael love Judge Merlin's daughter! L-a-w! Why I should as soon think of falling in love with a royal

princess!" exclaimed the honest man, in extreme astonishment.

"Reuben, hush! I hate to speak of it; but it is true. Pray, never let him know that we even suspect the truth; and be careful not to mention her name in his presence. I can see that he is struggling to conquer his feelings; but he can never do it while you continue to ding her name into his ears forever-lasting."

"I'll be mum! Ishmael in love with Miss Merlin! I should as soon suspicion him of being in love with the Queen of Spain! Good gracious! how angry she'd be if she knew it."

After this conversation Reuben Gray was very careful to avoid all mention of Claudia Merlin in the hearing of Ishmael.

The month of August was drawing to a close. Ishmael had not once set eyes on Claudia, though he had chanced to see the judge on horseback at a distance several times. Ishmael busied himself in seeking out a room in the neighborhood in which to open a school on the first of September. He had not as yet succeeded in his object, when one day an accident occurred that, as he used it, had a signal effect on his future life.

It was a rather cool morning in the latter part of August when he, after spending an hour or two of work in the garden, dressed himself in his best clothes and set off to walk to Rushy Shore farm, where he heard there was a small schoolhouse ready furnished with rough benches and desks, to be had at low rent. His road lay along the high banks of the river, above the sands. He had gone about a mile on his way when he heard the sound of carriage wheels behind him, and in a few minutes caught a glimpse of an open barouche, drawn by a pair of fine, spirited gray horses, as it flashed by him. Quickly as the carriage passed, he recognized in the distinguished looking young lady seated within it—Claudia!—recognized her with an electric shock that thrilled his whole being, paralyzed him where he stood and bound him to the spot! He gazed after the flying vehicle until it vanished from his sight. Then he sank down where he stood and covered his face with his hands and strove to calm the rising emotion that swelled his bosom. It was minutes before he recovered self-possession enough to arise and go on his way.

In due time he reached the farm—Rushy Shore—where the schoolhouse was for rent. It was a plain little log house close to the river side and shaded by cedars. It had been built

for the use of a poor country master who had worn out his life in teaching for small pay the humbler class of country children. He rested from his earthly labors, and the school was without a teacher. Ishmael saw only the overseer of the farm, who informed him that he had authority to let the schoolroom only until Christmas, as the whole estate had just been sold and the new owner was to take possession at the new year.

"Who is the new owner?" inquired Ishmael.

"Well, sir, his name is Middleton—Mr. James Middleton, from St. Mary's County: though I think I did hear as he was first of all from Virginia."

"Mr. Middleton! Mr. James Middleton!" exclaimed Ishmael, catching his breath for joy.

"Yes, sir; that is the gentleman; did you happen to know him?"

"Yes: intimately; he is one of the best and most honored friends I have in the world!" said Ishmael warmly.

"Then, sir, maybe he wouldn't be for turning you out of the schoolhouse even when the time we can let it for is up?"

"No, I don't think he would," said Ishmael, smiling, as he took his leave and started on his return. He walked rapidly on his way homeward, thinking of the strange destiny that threw him again among the friends of his childhood, when he was startled by a sound as of the sudden rush of wheels. He raised his head and beheld a fearful sight! Plunging madly towards the brink of the high bank were the horses of Claudia's returning carriage. The coachman had dropped the reins, which were trailing on the ground, sprung from his seat and was left some distance behind. Claudia retained hers, holding by the sides of the carriage; but her face was white as marble; her eyes were starting from their sockets; her teeth were firmly set; her lips drawn back; her hat lost and her black hair streaming behind her! On rushed the maddened beasts towards the brink of the precipice! another moment, and they would have dashed down into certain destruction!

Ishmael saw and hurled himself furiously forward between the rushing horses and the edge of the precipice, seizing the reins as the horses dashed up to him, and threw all his strength into the effort to turn them aside from their fate.

He did turn them from the brink of destruction, but alas! alas! as they were suddenly and violently whirled around they threw him down and passed, dragging the carriage with them, over his prostrate body!

At the same moment some fishermen on the sands below,

who had seen the impending catastrophe, rushed up the bank, headed the maddened horses and succeeded in stopping them.

Then Miss Merlin jumped from the carriage, and ran to the side of Ishmael.

In that instant of deadly peril she had recognized him; but all had passed so instantaneously that she had not had time to speak, scarcely to breathe.

Now she kneeled by his side and raised his head. He was mangled, bleeding, pallid, and insensible.

"Oh, for the love of God, leave those horses and come here, men! Come instantly!" cried Claudia, who with trembling hands was seeking on the boy's face and bosom for some signs of life.

Two of the men remained with the horses, but three rushed to the side of the young lady.

"Oh, Heaven! he is crushed to death, I fear! He was trampled down by the horses, and the whole carriage seemed to have passed over him! Oh, tell me! tell me! is he killed? is he quite, quite dead?" cried Claudia breathlessly, wringing her hands in anguish, as she arose from her kneeling posture to make room for the man.

The three got down beside him and began to examine his condition.

"Is he dead? Oh! is he dead?" cried Claudia.

"It's impossible to tell, miss," answered one of the men, who had his hand on Ishmael's wrist; "but he hain't got no pulse."

"And his leg is broken, to begin with," said another, who was busy feeling the poor fellow's limbs.

"And I think his ribs be broken, too," added the third man, who had his hand in the boy's bosom.

With a piercing scream Claudia threw herself down on the ground, bent over the fallen body, raised the poor, ghastly head in her arms, supported it on her bosom, snatched a vial of aromatic vinegar from her pocket, and began hastily to bathe the blanched face; her tears falling fast as she cried:

"He must not die! Oh, he shall not die! Oh, God have mercy on me, and spare his life! Oh, Savior of the world, save him! Sweet angels in heaven, come to his aid! Oh, Ishmael, my brother! my treasure! my own, dear boy, do not die! Better I had died than you! Come back! come back to me, my own! my beautiful boy, come back to me! You are mine!"

Her tears fell like rain; and utterly careless of the eyes

gazing in wonder upon her, she covered his cold, white face with kisses.

Those warm tears, those thrilling kisses, falling on his lifeless face, might have called back the boy's spirit, had it been waiting at the gates of heaven!

To Claudia's unutterable joy his sensitive features quivered, his pale cheeks flushed, his large, blue eyes opened, and with a smile of ineffable satisfaction he recognized the face that was bending over him. Then the pallid lips trembled and unclosed with the faintly uttered inquiry:

"You are safe, Miss Merlin?"

"Quite safe, my own dear boy! but oh! at what a cost to you!" she answered impulsively and fervently.

He closed his eyes, and while that look of ineffable bliss deepened on his face, he murmured some faint words that she stooped to catch:

"I am so happy—so happy—I could wish to die now!" he breathed.

"But you shall not die, dear Ishmael! God heard my cry and sent you back to me! You shall live!"

Then turning to the gaping men, she said:

"Raise him gently, and lay him in the barouche. Stop a moment!—I will get in first and arrange the cushions for him."

And with that she tenderly laid the boy's head back upon the ground, and entered the carriage, and with her own hands took all the cushions from the tops of the seats, and arranged them so as to make a level bed for the hurt boy. Then she placed herself in the back seat, and, as they lifted him into the carriage, she took his head and shoulders and supported them upon her lap.

But Ishmael had fainted from the pain of being moved. And oh! what a mangled form he seemed, as she held him in her arms upon her bosom, while his broken limbs lay out upon the pile of cushions.

"One of you two now take the horses by the head, and lead them slowly, by the river road, towards Tanglewood House. It is the longest road, but the smoothest," said Miss Merlin.

Two of the men started to obey this order, saying that it might take more than one to manage the horses if they should grow restive again.

"That is very true; besides, you can relieve each other in leading the horses. And now one of the others must run directly to the house of the Overseer Gray, and tell him what

has happened, and direct him to ride off immediately to Shelton and fetch Dr. Jarvis to Tanglewood."

All three of the remaining men started off zealously upon this errand. Meanwhile Sam, the craven coachman, came up with a crestfallen air to the side of the carriage, whimpering:

"Miss Claudia, I hope nobody was dangerously hurt?"

"Nobody dangerously hurt? Ishmael Worth is killed for aught I know! Keep out of my way, you cowardly villain!" exclaimed Claudia angrily, for you know the heiress was no angel.

"'Deed and 'deed, Miss Claudia, I didn't know what I was a-doing of no more than the dead when I jumped out'n the b'rouche! 'Clare to my Marster in heben I didn't!" whined Sam.

"Perhaps not; but keep out of my way!" repeated Claudia, with her eyes kindling.

"But please, miss, mayn't I drive you home now?"

"What? after nearly breaking my neck, which was saved only by the cost of this poor boy's life, perhaps?"

"Please, Miss Claudia, I'll be careful another time—"

"Careful of your own life!"

"Please, miss, let me drive you home this once."

"Not to save your soul!"

"But what'll ole Marse say?" cried Sam, in utter dismay.

"That is your affair. I advise you to keep out of his way also! Begone from my sight! Go on, men!" finally ordered Miss Merlin.

Sam, more ashamed of himself than ever, slunk away.

And the fishermen started to lead the horses and carriage towards Tanglewood.

Meanwhile the messengers dispatched by Claudia hurried on towards Reuben Gray's cottage. But before they got in sight of the house they came full upon Reuben, who was mounted on his white cob, and riding as if for a wager.

"Hey! hallo! stop!" cried the foremost man, throwing up his arms before the horse, which immediately started and shied.

"Hush, can't ye! Don't stop me now! I'm in a desp'at hurry! I'm off for the doctor! My wife's taken bad, and may die before I get back!" exclaimed Reuben, with a scared visage, as he tried to pass the messengers.

"Going for the doctor! There's just where we were going to send you! Go as fast as you can, and if your wife isn't

very bad indeed, send him first of all to Tanglewood, where he is wanted immediately."

"Who is ill there?" inquired Reuben anxiously.

"Nobody! but your nephew has been knocked down and trampled nearly to death while stopping Miss Merlin's horses that were running away with her."

"Ishmael hurt! Good gracious! there's nothing but trouble in this world! Where is the poor lad?"

"Miss Merlin has taken him to Tanglewood. The doctor is wanted there."

"I'll send him as soon as ever I can; but I must get him to Hannah first! I must indeed!" And with that Reuben put whip to his horse and rode away; but in a moment he wheeled again and rode back to the fishermen, saying:

"Hallo, Simpson! are you going past our place?"

"Yes," replied the man.

"Well, then, mind and don't breathe a word about Ishmael's accident to Hannah, or to anybody about the place as might tell her; because she's very ill, and the shock might be her death, you know," said Reuben anxiously.

"All right! we'll be careful," replied the man. And Reuben rode off.

He was so fortunate as to find Dr. Jarvis at his office and get him to come immediately to Woodside. But not until the doctor had seen Hannah and declared that his farther services would not be required by her for several hours yet, did Reuben mention to him the other case that awaited his attention at Tanglewood. And Dr. Jarvis, with a movement of impatience at the unnecessary delay, hurried thither.

CHAPTER XX

ISHMAEL AT TANGLEWOOD

MEANWHILE the carriage traveling slowly reached Tanglewood. Slowly pacing up and down the long piazza in front of the house was Judge Merlin. He was a rather singular-looking man of about forty-five years of age. He was very tall, thin, and bony, with high aquiline features, dark complexion, and iron-gray hair, which he wore long and parted in the middle. He was habited in a loose jacket, vest, and trousers of brown linen, and wore a broad-brimmed straw hat on his head, and large slippers, down at the heel, on his feet. He carried in his hand a lighted pipe of common clay,

and he walked with a slow, swinging gait, and an air of careless indifference to all around him. Altogether, he presented the idea of a civilized Indian chief, rather than that of a Christian gentleman. Tradition said that the blood of King Powhatan flowed in Randolph Merlin's veins, and certainly his personal appearance, character, tastes, habits, and manners favored the legend.

On seeing the carriage approach he had taken the clay pipe from his mouth and sauntered forward. On seeing the strange burden that his daughter supported in her arms, he came down to the side of the carriage exclaiming:

"Who have you got there, Claudia?"

"Oh, papa, it is Ishmael Worth! He has killed himself, I fear, in saving me! My horses ran away, ran directly towards the steeps above the river, and would have plunged over if he had not started forward and turned their heads in time; but the horses, as they turned, knocked him down and ran over him!" cried Claudia, in almost breathless vehemence.

"What was Sam doing all this time?" inquired the judge, as he stood contemplating the insensible boy.

"Oh, papa, he sprang from the carriage as soon as the horses became unmanageable and ran away! But don't stop here asking useless questions! Lift him out and take him into the house! Gently, papa! gently," said Claudia, as Judge Merlin slipped his long arms under the youth's body and lifted him from the carriage.

"Now, then, what do you expect me to do with him?" inquired Judge Merlin, looking around as if for a convenient place to lay him on the grass.

"Oh, papa, take him right into the spare bedroom on the lower floor! and lay him on the bed. I have sent for a doctor to attend him here," answered Claudia, as she sprang from the carriage and led the way into the very room she had indicated.

"He is rather badly hurt," said the judge, as he laid Ishmael upon the bed and arranged his broken limbs as easily as he could.

"'Rather badly!' he is crushed nearly to death! I told you the whole carriage passed over him!" cried Claudia, with a hysterical sob, as she bent over the boy.

"Worse than I thought," continued the judge, as he proceeded to unbutton Ishmael's coat and loosen his clothes. "Did you say you sent for a doctor?"

"Yes! as soon as it happened! He ought to be here in an hour from this!" replied Claudia, wringing her hands.

"His clothes must be cut away from him; it might do his fractured limbs irreparable injury to try to draw off his coat and trousers in the usual manner. Leave him to me, Claudia, and go and tell old Katie to come here and bring a pair of sharp shears with her," ordered the judge.

Claudia stooped down quietly, gave one wistful, longing, compassionate gaze at the still, cold white face of the sufferer, and then hurried out to obey her father's directions. She sent old Katie in, and then threw off her hat and mantle and sat down on the step of the door to watch for the doctor's approach, and also to be at hand to hear any tidings that might come from the room of the wounded boy.

More than an hour Claudia remained on the watch without seeing anyone. Then, when suspense grew intolerable, she impulsively sprang up and silently hastened to the door of the sick-room and softly rapped.

The judge came and opened it.

"Oh, papa, how is he?"

"Breathing, Claudia, that is all! I wish to Heaven the doctor would come! Are you sure the messenger went after him!"

"Oh, yes, papa, I am sure! Do let me come in and see him!"

"It is no place for you, Claudia; he is partially undressed; I will take care of him."

And with these words the judge gently closed the door in his daughter's face.

Claudia went back to her post.

"Why don't the doctor come! And oh! why don't Reuben Gray or Hannah come? It is dreadful to sit here and wait!" she exclaimed, as with a sudden resolution she sprang up again, seized her hat and ran out of the house with the intention of proceeding directly to the Gray's cottage.

But a few paces from the house she met the doctor's gig.

"Oh, Doctor Jarvis, I am so glad you have come at last!" she cried.

"Who is it that is hurt?" inquired the doctor.

"Ishmael Worth, our overseer's nephew!"

"How did it happen?"

"Didn't they tell you?"

"No."

"Oh, poor boy! He threw himself before my horses to stop them as they were running down the steeps over the

river; and he turned them aside, but they knocked him down and ran over him!"

"Bad! very bad! poor fellow!" said the doctor, jumping from his gig as he drew up before the house.

Claudia ran in before him, leading the way to the sick chamber, at the door of which she rapped to announce the arrival. This time old Katie opened the door, and admitted the doctor.

Claudia, excluded from entrance, walked up and down the hall in a fever of anxiety.

Once old Katie came out and Claudia arrested her.

"What does the doctor say, Katie?"

"He don't say nothing satisfactory, Miss Claudia. Don't stop me, please! I'm sent for bandages and things!"

And Katie hurried on her errand, and presently reappeared with her arms full of linen and other articles, which she carried into the sick-room. Later, the doctor came out attended by the judge.

Claudia waylaid them with the questions:

"What is the nature of his injuries? are they fatal?"

"Not fatal; but very serious. One leg and arm are broken; and he is very badly bruised; but worst of all is the great shock to his very sensitive nervous system," was the reply of Doctor Jarvis.

"When will you see him again, sir?" anxiously inquired Claudia.

"In the course of the evening. I am not going back home for some hours, perhaps not for the night; I have a case at Gray's."

"Indeed! that is the reason, then, I suppose, why no one has answered my message to come up and see Ishmael. But who is sick there?" inquired Claudia.

"Mrs. Gray. Good-afternoon, Miss Merlin," said the doctor shortly, as he walked out of the house attended by the judge.

Claudia went to the door of Ishmael's room and rapped softly.

Old Katie answered the summons.

"Can I come in now, Katie?" asked Miss Merlin, a little impatiently.

"Oh, yes, I s'pose so; I s'pose you'd die if you didn't!" answered this privileged old servant, holding open the door for Claudia's admittance.

She passed softly into the darkened room, and approached the bedside. Ishmael lay there swathed in linen bandages and

extended at full length, more like a shrouded corpse than a living boy. His eyes were closed and his face was livid.

"Is he asleep?" inquired Claudia, in a tone scarcely above her breath.

"Sort o' sleep. You see, arter de doctor done set his arm an' leg, an' splintered of 'em up, an' boun' up his wounds an' bruises, he gib him some'at to 'pose his nerves and make him sleep, an' it done hev him into dis state; which you see yourse'f is nyder sleep nor wake nor dead nor libe."

Claudia saw indeed that he was under the effects of morphia. And with a deep sigh of strangely blended relief and apprehension, Claudia sank into a chair beside his bed.

And old Katie took that opportunity to slip out and eat her "bit of dinner," leaving Claudia watching.

At the expiration of an hour Katie returned to her post. But Claudia did not therefore quit hers. She remained seated beside the wounded boy. All that day he lay quietly, under the influence of morphia. Once the judge looked in to inquire the state of the patient, and on being told that the boy still slept, he went off again. Late in the afternoon the doctor came again, saw that his patient was at ease, left directions for his treatment, and then prepared to depart.

"How is the sick woman at Gray's?" inquired Claudia.

"Extremely ill. I am going immediately back there to remain until it is over; if I should be particularly wanted here, send there for me," said the doctor.

"Yes; but I am very sorry Mrs. Gray is so ill! She is Ishmael's aunt. What is the matter with her?"

"Humph!" answered the doctor. "Good-night, Miss Claudia. You will know where to send for me, if I am wanted here."

"Yes; but I am so sorry about Gray's wife! Is she in danger?" persisted Claudia.

"Yes."

"I am very sorry; but what ails her?" persevered Claudia.

"Good-evening, Miss Merlin," replied the doctor, lifting his hat and departing.

"The man is half asleep; he has not answered my question," grumbled Claudia, as she returned to her seat by the sick-bed.

Just then the bell rang for the late dinner, and Claudia went out and crossed the hall to the dining room, where she joined her father. And while at dinner she gave him

a more detailed account of her late danger, and the manner in which she was saved.

Once more in the course of that evening Claudia looked in upon the wounded boy, to ascertain his condition before retiring to her room. He was still sleeping.

"If he should wake up, you must call me, no matter what time of night it is, Katie," said Miss Merlin, as she left the sick-chamber.

"Yes, miss," answered Katie, who nevertheless made up her mind to use her own discretion in the matter of obedience to this order.

So late was it when Miss Merlin dropped off to sleep that, once asleep, she continued so until late in the day.

Meanwhile all the rest of the family were up and astir. The doctor came early and went in to see his patient. The judge breakfasted alone, and then joined the doctor in the sick-room. Ishmael was awake, but pale, languid, and suffering. The doctor was seated beside him. He had just finished dressing his wounds, and had ordered some light nourishment, which old Katie had left the room to bring.

"How is your patient getting along, doctor?" inquired the judge.

"Oh, he is doing very well—very well indeed," replied the doctor, putting the best face on a bad affair, after the manner of his class.

"How do you feel, my lad?" inquired the judge, bending over the patient.

"In some pain; but no more than I can very well bear, thank you, sir," said Ishmael courteously. But his white and quivering lip betrayed the extremity of his suffering, and the difficulty he experienced in speaking at all.

"I must beg, sir, that you will not talk to him; he must be left in perfect quietness," whispered the doctor.

At this moment old Katie returned with a little light jelly on a plate. The doctor slowly administered a few teaspoonfuls to his patient, and then returned the plate to the nurse.

"Miss Claudia ordered me to call her as soon as the young man woke; and now as his wounds is dressed, and he has had somethin' to eat, I might's well go call her," suggested Katie.

At the hearing of Claudia's name Ishmael's eyes flew open, and a hectic spot blazed upon his pale cheek. The doctor, who had his eye upon his patient, noticed this, as he replied:

"Upon no account! Neither Miss Merlin nor anyone else must be permitted to enter his room for days to come—not

until I give leave. You will see this obeyed, judge?" he inquired, turning to his host.

"Assuredly," replied the latter.

At these words the color faded from Ishmael's face and the light from his eyes.

The doctor arose and took leave.

The judge attended him to the door, saw him depart, and was in the act of turning into his own house when he perceived Reuben Gray approaching.

Judge Merlin paused to wait for his overseer. Reuben Gray came up, took off his hat, and stood before his employer with the most comical blending of emotions on his weather-beaten countenance, where joy, grief, satisfaction and anxiety seemed to strive for the mastery.

"Well, Gray, what is it?" inquired the judge.

"Please, sir, how is Ishmael?" entreated Reuben, anxiety getting the upper hand for the moment.

"He is badly hurt, Gray; but doing very well, the doctor says."

"Please, sir, can I see him?"

"Not upon any account for the present; he must be left in perfect quiet. But why haven't you been up to inquire after him before this?"

"Ah, sir, the state of my wife."

"Oh, yes, I heard she was ill; but did not know that she was so ill as to prevent your coming to see after your poor boy. I hope she is better now?"

"Yes, sir, thank Heaven, she is well over it!" said Reuben, satisfaction now expressed in every lineament of his honest face.

"What was the matter with her? Was it the cholera morbus, that is so prevalent at this season?"

Reuben grinned from ear to ear; but did not immediately reply.

The judge looked as if he still expected an answer. Reuben scratched his gray head, and looked up from the corner of his eye, as he at length replied:

"It was a boy and a gal, sir!"

"A what?" questioned the judge—perplexity.

"A boy and a gal, sir; twins, sir they is," replied Reuben Gray, joy getting the mastery over every other expression in his beaming countenance.

"Why—you don't mean to tell me that your wife has pre-

sented you with twins?" exclaimed the judge, both surprised and amused at the announcement.

"Well, yes, sir," said Reuben proudly.

"But you are such an elderly couple!" laughed the judge.

"Well, yes, sir, so we is! And that, I take it, is the very reason on't. You see, I think, sir, because we married very late in life—poor Hannah and me—natur' took a consideration on to it, and, as we hadn't much time before us, she sent us two at once! at least, if that ain't the reason, I can't account for them both in any other way!" said Reuben, looking up.

"That's it! You've hit it, Reuben!" said the judge, laughing. "And mind, if they live, I'll stand godfather to the babies at the christening. Are they fine healthy children?"

"As bouncing babies, sir, as ever you set eyes on!" answered Reuben triumphantly.

"Count on me, then, Gray."

"Thank you, sir! And, your honor—"

"Well, Gray?"

"Soon as ever Ishmael is able to hear the news, tell him, will you, please? I think it will set him up, and help him on towards his recovery."

"I think so, too," said the judge.

Reuben touched his hat and withdrew. And the judge returned to the house.

Claudia had come down and breakfasted, but was in a state of great annoyance because she was denied admittance to the bed-side of her suffering favorite.

The judge, to divert her thoughts, told her of the bountiful present nature had made to Hannah and Reuben Gray. At which Miss Claudia was so pleased that she got up and went to hunt through all her finery for presents for the children.

CHAPTER XXI

THE HEIRESS

Almost any other youth than Ishmael Worth would have died of such injuries as he had sustained. But owing to that indestructible vitality and irrepressible elasticity of organization which had carried him safely through the deadly perils of his miserable infancy, he survived.

About the fourth day of his illness the irritative fever of

his wounds having been subdued, Judge Merlin was admitted to see and converse with him.

Up to this morning the judge had thought of the victim only as the overseer's nephew, a poor, laboring youth about the estate, who had got hurt in doing his duty and stopping Miss Merlin's runaway horses; and he supposed that he, Judge Merlin, had done his part in simply taking the suffering youth into his own house and having him properly attended to. And now the judge went to the patient with the intention of praising his courage and offering him some proper reward for his services—as, for instance, a permanent situation to work on the estate for good wages.

And so Judge Merlin entered the sick-chamber, which was no longer darkened, but all the windows open to admit the light and air.

He took a chair and seated himself by the bedside of the patient, and for the first time took a good look at him.

Ishmael's handsome face, no longer distorted by suffering, was calm and clear; his eyes were closed in repose but not in sleep, for the moment the judge "hemmed" he raised his eyelids and greeted his host with a gentle smile and nod.

Judge Merlin could not but be struck with the delicacy, refinement, and intellectuality of Ishmael's countenance.

"How do you feel yourself this morning, my lad?" he inquired, putting the usual commonplace question.

"Much easier, thank you, sir," replied the youth, in the pure sweet, modulated tones of a highly-cultivated nature.

The judge was surprised, but did not show that he was so, as he said:

"You have done my daughter a great service; but at the cost of much suffering to yourself, I fear, my lad."

"I consider myself very fortunate and happy, sir, in having had the privilege of rendering Miss Merlin any service, at whatever cost to myself," replied Ishmael, with graceful courtesy.

More and more astonished at the words and manner of the young workman, the judge continued:

"Thank you, young man; very properly spoken—very properly; but for all that, I must find some way of rewarding you."

"Sir," said Ishmael, with gentle dignity, "I must beg you will not speak to me of reward for a simple act of instinctive gallantry that any man, worthy of the name, would have performed."

"But with you, young man, the case was different," said the judge loftily.

"True, sir," replied our youth, with sweet and courteous dignity, "with me the case was very different; because, with me, it was a matter of self-interest; for the service rendered to Miss Merlin was rendered to myself."

"I do not understand you, young man," said the judge haughtily.

"Pardon me, sir, I mean that in saving Miss Merlin from injury I saved myself from despair. If any harm had befallen her I should have been miserable; so you perceive, sir, that the act you are good enough to term a great service was too natural and too selfish to be praised or rewarded; and so I must beseech you to speak of it in that relation no more."

"But what was my daughter to you that you should risk your life for her, more than for another? or that her maimed limbs or broken neck should affect you more than others?"

"Sir, we were old acquaintances; I saw her every day when I went to Mr. Middleton's, and she was ever exceedingly kind to me," replied Ishmael.

"Oh, and you lived in that neighborhood?" inquired Judge Merlin, who immediately jumped to the conclusion that Ishmael had been employed as a laborer on Mr. Middleton's estate; though still he could not possibly account for the refinement in Ishmael's manner nor the excellence of his language.

"I lived in that neighborhood with my Aunt Hannah until Uncle Reuben married her, when I accompanied them to this place," answered Ishmael.

"Ah, and you saw a great deal of Mr. Middleton and—and his family?"

"I saw them every day, sir; they were very, very kind to me."

"Every day! then you must have been employed about the house," said the judge.

An arch smile beamed in the eyes of Ishmael as he answered:

"Yes, sir, I was employed about the house—that is to say, in the schoolroom."

"Ah! to sweep it out and keep it in order, I suppose; and, doubtless, there was where you contracted your superior tone of manners and conversation," thought the judge to himself, but he replied aloud:

"Well young man, we will say no more of rewards, since the word is distasteful to you; but as soon as you can get

strong again, I should be pleased to give you work about the place at fair wages. Our miller wants a white boy to go around with the grist. Would you like the place?"

"I thank you, sir, no; my plans for the future are fixed; that is, as nearly fixed as those of short-sighted mortals can be," smiled Ishmael.

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed the judge, raising his eyebrows, "and may I, as one interested in your welfare, inquire what those plans may be?"

"Certainly, sir, and I thank you very much for the interest you express, as well as for all your kindness to me." Ishmael paused for a moment and then added:

"On the first of September I shall open the Rushy Shore schoolhouse, for the reception of day pupils."

"Whe-ew!" said the judge, with a low whistle, "and do you really mean to be a schoolmaster?"

"For the present, sir, until a better one can be found to fill the place; then, indeed, I shall feel bound in honor and conscience to resign my post, for I do not believe teaching to be my true vocation."

"No! I should think not, indeed!" replied Judge Merlin, who of course supposed the overseer's nephew, notwithstanding the grace and courtesy of his speech and manner, to be fit for nothing but manual labor. "What ever induces you to try school-keeping?" he inquired.

"I am driven to it by my own necessities, and drawn to it by the necessities of others. In other words, I need employment, and the neighborhood needs a teacher—and I think, sir, that one who conscientiously does his best is better than none at all. Those are the reasons, sir, why I have taken the school, with the intention of keeping it until a person more competent than myself to discharge its duties shall be found, when I shall give it up; for, as I said before, teaching is not my ultimate vocation."

"What is your 'ultimate vocation,' young man? for I should like to help you to it," said the judge, still thinking only of manual labor in all its varieties; "what is it?"

"Jurisprudence," answered Ishmael.

"Juris—what?" demanded the judge, as if he had not heard aright.

"Jurisprudence—the science of human justice; the knowledge of the laws, customs, and rights of man in communities; the study above all others most necessary to the due administration of justice in human affairs, and even in divine, and

second only to that of theology," replied Ishmael, with grave enthusiasm.

"But—you don't mean to say that you intend to become a lawyer?" exclaimed the judge, in a state of astonishment that bordered on consternation.

"Yes, sir; I intend to be a lawyer, if it please the Lord to bless my earnest efforts," replied the youth reverently.

"Why—I am a lawyer!" exclaimed the judge.

"I am aware that you are a very distinguished one, sir, having risen to the bench of the Supreme Court of your native State," replied the youth respectfully.

The judge remained in a sort of panic of astonishment. The thought in his mind was this: What—you? you, the nephew of my overseer, have you the astounding impudence, the madness, to think that you can enter a profession of which I am a member?

Ishmael saw that thought reflected in his countenance and smiled to himself.

"But—how do you propose ever to become a lawyer?" inquired the judge, aloud.

"By reading law," answered Ishmael simply.

"What! upon your own responsibility?"

"Upon my own responsibility for a while. I shall try afterwards to enter the office of some lawyer. I shall use every faculty, try every means and improve every opportunity that Heaven grants me for this end. And thus I hope to succeed," said Ishmael gravely.

"Are you aware," inquired the judge, with a little sarcasm in his tone, "that some knowledge of the classics is absolutely necessary to the success of a lawyer?"

"I am aware that a knowledge of the classics is very desirable in each and all of what are termed the 'learned professions'; but I did not know, and I do not think, that it can be absolutely necessary in every grade of each of these; but if so, it is well for me that I have a fair knowledge of Latin and Greek," replied Ishmael.

"What did you say?" inquired the judge, with ever-increasing wonder.

Ishmael blushed at the perception that while he only meant to state a fact, he might be suspected of making a boast.

"Did you say that you knew anything of Latin and Greek?" inquired the judge, in amazement.

"Something of both, sir," replied Ishmael modestly.

"But surely you never picked up a smattering of the

lassics while sweeping out Middleton's family schoolroom!"

"Oh, no, sir!" laughed Ishmael.

"Where then?"

Ishmael's reply was lost in the bustling entrance of Doctor arvis, whom Judge Merlin arose to receive.

The doctor examined the condition of his patient, found im with an accession of fever, prescribed a complete repose or the remainder of the day, left some medicine with direc- ions for its administration, and departed. The judge accom- anied the doctor to the door.

"That is a rather remarkable boy," observed Judge Merlin, s they went out together.

"A very remarkable one! Who is he?" asked Doctor arvis.

"The nephew of my overseer, Reuben Gray. That is abso- utely all I know about it."

"The nephew of Gray? Can it be so? Why, Gray is but n ignorant boor, while this youth has the manners and educa- ion of a gentleman—a polished gentleman!" exclaimed the loctor, in astonishment.

"It is true, and I can make nothing of it," said Judge Mer- in, shaking his head.

"How very strange," mused the doctor, as he mounted his orse, bowed and rode away.

CHAPTER XXII

CLAUDIA'S PERPLEXITIES

JUDGE MERLIN went into his well-ordered library, rang the ell, and sent a servant to call his daughter.

The messenger found Claudia walking impatiently up and down the drawing-room floor and turning herself at each wall with an angry jerk. Claudia had not yet been admitted o see Ishmael. She had just been refused again by old Katie, who acted upon the doctor's authority, and Claudia was un- easonably furious with everybody.

Claudia instantly obeyed the summons. She entered the ibrary with hasty steps, closed the door with a bang, and stood before her father with flushed cheeks, sparkling eyes, and heaving bosom.

"Hey, dey! what's the matter?" asked the judge, taking his pipe from his mouth and staring at his daughter.

"You sent for me, papa! I hope it is to take me in to see that poor, half-crushed boy! What does old Katie mean by forever denying me entrance? It is not every day that a poor lad risks his life and gets himself crushed nearly to death in my service, that I should be made to appear to neglect him in this way! What must the boy think of me? What does old Katie mean, I ask?"

"If your nature requires a vehement expression, of course I am not the one to repress it! Still, in my opinion, vehemency is unworthy of a rational being, at all times, and especially when, as now, there is not the slightest occasion for it. You have not willfully neglected the young man; it is not of the least consequence whether he thinks you have, or not; and, finally Katie means to obey the doctor's orders, which are to keep every living soul out of the sick-room to secure the patient needful repose. I believe I have answered you, Miss Merlin," replied the judge, smiling and coolly replacing his pipe in his mouth.

"Papa, what a disagreeable wet blanket you are, to be sure!"

"It is my nature to be so, my dear; and I am just what you need to dampen the fire of your temperament."

"Are those the orders of the doctor?"

"What, wet blankets for you?"

"No; but that everybody must be excluded from Ishmael's room?"

"Yes; his most peremptory orders, including even me for the present."

"Then I suppose they must be submitted to?"

"For the present, certainly."

Claudia shrugged her shoulders with an impatient gesture and then said:

"You sent for me, papa. Was it for anything particular?"

"Yes; to question you. Have you been long acquainted with this Ishmael Gray?"

"Ishmael Worth, papa! Yes, I have known him well ever since you placed me with my Aunt Middleton," replied Claudia, throwing herself into a chair.

The judge was slowly walking up and down the library, and he continued his walk as he conversed with his daughter.

"Who is this Ishmael Worth, then?"

"You know, papa; the nephew of Reuben Gray, or rather of his wife; but it is the same thing."

"I know he is the nephew of Reuben Gray; but that ex-

blains nothing! Gray is a rude, ignorant, though well-meaning boor; but this lad is a refined, graceful, and cultivated young man."

Claudia made no comment upon this.

"Now, if you have known him so many years, you ought to be able to explain this inconsistency. One does not expect to find nightingales in crows' nests," said the judge.

Still Miss Merlin was silent.

"Why don't you speak, my dear?"

Claudia blushed over her face, neck and bosom as she answered:

"Papa, what shall I say? You force me to remember things I would like to forget. Socially, Ishmael Worth was born the lowest of all the low. Naturally, he was endowed with the highest moral and intellectual gifts. He is in a great measure self-educated. In worldly position he is beneath our feet; in wisdom and goodness he is far, far above our heads. He is one of nature's princes, but one of society's outcasts."

"But how has the youth contrived to procure the means of such education as he has?" inquired the judge, seating himself opposite his daughter.

"Papa, I will tell you all I know about him," replied Claudia. And she commenced and related the history of Ishmael's struggles, trials, and triumphs, from the hour of her first meeting with him in front of Hamlin's book shop to that of his self-immolation to save her from death. Claudia spoke with deep feeling. As she concluded her bosom was heaving, her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes tearful with emotion.

"And now, papa," she said, as she finished her narrative, "you will understand why it is that I cannot, must not, will not, neglect him! As soon as he can bear visitors I must be admitted to his room, to do for him all that a young sister might do for her brother; no one could reasonably cavil at that. Papa, Ishmael believes in me more than anyone else in the world does. He thinks more highly of me than others do. He knows that there is something better in me than this mere outside beauty that others praise so foolishly. And I would not like to lose his good opinion, papa. I could not bear to have him think me cold, selfish, or ungrateful. So I must and I will help to nurse him."

The imperious girl indignantly left the room, but had scarcely disappeared before her place in the doorway was filled up by the tall, gaunt figure, gray head, and smiling face of Reuben.

"Well, Gray?"

"Well, sir, I have brought the farm books all made up to the first of the month, sir," said the overseer, laying the volumes on the table before his master.

"And very neatly and accurately done, too," remarked the judge, as he turned over the pages and examined the items. "It is not your handwriting, Gray?"

"Dear, no, sir! not likely!"

"Nor little Kitty's?"

"Why, law, sir! little Kitty has been in Californy a year or more! How did you like the 'rangement of your liber-airy, sir?" inquired Gray, with apparent irrelevance, as he glanced around upon the book-lined walls.

"Very much, indeed, Gray! I never had my books so well classified. It was the work of young Ramsey, the schoolmaster, I suppose, and furnished him with employment during the midsummer holidays. You must tell him that I am very much pleased with the work and that he must send in his account immediately."

"Law bless you, sir; it was not Master Ramsey as did it," said Gray, with a broad grin.

"Who, then? Whoever it was, it is all the same to me; I am pleased with the work, and willing to testify my approval by a liberal payment."

"It was the same hand, sir, as made out the farm-books."

"And who was that?"

"It was my nephew, Ishmael Worth, sir," replied Reuben, with a little pardonable pride.

"Ishmael Worth again!" exclaimed the judge.

"Yes, sir; he done 'em both."

At the evening dinner table the judge said to his daughter:

"Well, Claudia! the doctor has been here on his evening visit, and he says that you may see our young patient in the morning, after he has had his breakfast; but that no visitor must be admitted to his chamber at any later hour of the day."

"Very well, papa. I hope you will give old Katie to understand that, so she may not give me any trouble when I apply at the door," smiled Claudia.

"Katie understands it all, my dear," said the judge.

And so it was arranged that Claudia should visit her young preserver on the following morning.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INTERVIEW

It was as yet early morning; but the day promised to be ultry, and all the windows of Ishmael's chamber were open o facilitate the freest passage of air. Ishmael lay motionless pon his cool, white bed, letting his glances wander abroad, hither his broken limbs could no longer carry him.

His room, being a corner one, rejoiced in four large indows, two looking east and two north. Close up to these indows grew the clustering woods. Amid their branches ven the wildest birds built nests, and their strange songs ingled with the rustle of the golden green leaves as they limmered in the morning sun and breeze.

It was a singular combination, that comfortable room, bounding in all the elegancies of the highest civilization, and hat untrodden wilderness in which the whip-poor-will cried nd the wild eagle screamed.

And Ishmael, as he looked through the dainty white-draped indows into the tremulous shadows of the wood, understood ow the descendant of Powhatan, weary of endless brick alls, dusty streets, and crowded thoroughfares, should, as oon as he was free from official duties, fly to the opposite xtreme of all these—to his lodge in this unbroken forest, here scarcely a woodman's ax had sounded, where scarcely human foot had fallen.

As these reveries floated through the clear, active brain of he invalid youth, the door of his chamber softly opened.

She stood within the open doorway! How lovely she ooked, with her soft, white muslin morning dress floating reely around her graceful form, and her glittering jet black inglets shading her snowy forehead, shadowy eyes, and amask cheeks!

She closed the door as softly as she had opened it, and ad-anced into the room.

Old Katie arose from some obscure corner and placed a hair for her near the head of Ishmael's bed on his right ide.

Claudia sank gently into this seat and turned her face to-

wards Ishmael, and attempted to speak; but a sudden, hysterical rising in her throat choked her voice.

Her eyes had taken in all at a glance!—the splintered leg, the bandaged arm, the plastered chest, the ashen complexion, the sunken cheeks and the hollow eyes of the poor youth; and utterance failed her!

But Ishmael gently and respectfully pressed the hand she had given him, and smiled as he said:

"It is very kind of you to come and see me, Miss Merlin. I thank you earnestly." For, however strong Ishmael's emotions might have been, he possessed the self-controlling power of an exalted nature.

"Oh, Ishmael!" was all that Claudia found ability to say; her voice was choked, her bosom heaving, her face pallid.

"Pray, pray, do not disturb yourself, Miss Merlin; indeed I am doing very well," said the youth, smiling. The next instant he turned away his face; it was to conceal a spasm of agony that suddenly sharpened all his features, blanched his lips, and forced the cold sweat out of his brow. But Claudia had seen it.

"Oh, I fear you suffer very much," she said.

The spasm had passed as quickly as it came. He turned to her his smiling eyes.

"I fear you suffer very, very much," she repeated, looking at him.

"Oh, no, not much; see how soon the pain passed away."

"Ah! but it was so severe while it lasted! I saw that it caught your breath away! I saw it, though you tried to hide it! Ah! you do suffer, Ishmael! and for me! me," she cried, forgetting her pride in the excess of her sympathy.

The smile in Ishmael's dark blue eyes deepened to ineffable tenderness and beauty as he answered softly:

"It is very, very sweet to suffer for—one we esteem and honor."

"I am not worth an hour of your pain!" exclaimed Claudia, with something very like self-reproach.

"Oh, Miss Merlin, if you knew how little I should value my life in comparison with your safety." Ishmael paused; for he felt that perhaps he was going too far.

"Oh, Ishmael, let us not talk any more about me! Talk of yourself. Tell me how you are, and where you feel pain."

"Nowhere much, Miss Merlin."

"Papa told me that two of your limbs were broken and your chest injured, and now I see all that for myself."

"My injuries are doing very well. My broken bones are knitting together again as fast as they possibly can, my physician says."

"But that is a very painful process, I fear," said Claudia compassionately.

"Indeed, no; I do not find it so."

"Ah! your face shows what you endure. It is your chest, then, that hurts you?"

"My chest is healing very rapidly. Do not distress your kind heart, Miss Merlin; indeed, I am doing very well."

"You are very patient, and therefore you will do well, if you are not doing so now. Ishmael, now that I am permitted to visit you, I shall come every day. But they have limited me to fifteen minutes' stay this morning, and my time is up. Good-morning, Ishmael."

"Good-morning, Miss Merlin. May the Lord bless you," said Ishmael, respectfully pressing the hand she gave him.

"I will come again to-morrow; and then if you continue to grow better, I may be allowed to remain with you for half an hour," she said, rising.

"Thank you, Miss Merlin; I shall try to grow better; you have given me a great incentive to improvement."

Claudia's face grew grave again. She bowed coldly and left the room.

Ishmael's next visitor was Reuben Gray, who was admitted to see him for a few minutes only. This was Reuben's first visit to the invalid. As Ishmael looked brighter than usual, Reuben thought that he must be getting on remarkably well, and congratulated him accordingly.

Ishmael smilingly returned the compliment by wishing Gray joy of his son and daughter.

Reuben grinned with delight and expatiated on their beauty, until it was time for him to take leave.

"Your Aunt Hannah don't know as you've been hurt, my boy; we dar'n't tell her, for fear of the consequences. But now as you really do seem to be getting on so well, and as she is getting strong so fast, and continually asking arter you, I think I will just go and tell her all about it, and as how there is no cause to be alarmed no more," said Reuben, as he stood, hat in hand, by Ishmael's bed.

"Yes, do, Uncle Reuben, else she will think I neglect her," pleaded Ishmael.

Reuben promised, and then took his departure.

Claudia usually spent several hours of the forenoon in Ish-

mael's company. He was still very weak, pale, and thin. His arm was in a sling, and as it was his right arm, as well as his right leg that had been broken, he could not use a crutch; so that he was confined all day to the sofa or the easy-chair, in which his nurse would place him in the morning.

Claudia devoted herself to his amusement with all a sister's care. She read to him; sang to him, accompanying her song with the guitar; and she played chess—Ishmael using his left hand to move the pieces.

Claudia knew that the gifted boy worshiped her with a passionate love that was growing deeper, stronger, and more ardent every day. She knew that probably his peace of mind would be utterly wrecked by his fatal passion. She knew all this, and yet she would not withdraw herself, either suddenly or gradually. The adoration of this young, pure, exalted soul was an intoxicating incense that had become a daily habit and necessity to the heiress. But she tacitly required it to be a silent offering. So long as her lover worshiped her only with his eyes, tones, and manners, she was satisfied, gracious, and cordial; but the instant he was betrayed into any words of admiration or interest in her, she grew cold and haughty, she chilled and repelled him.

And yet she did not mean to trifle with his affections or destroy his peace; but—it was very dull in the country, and Claudia had nothing else to occupy and interest her mind and heart. Besides, she really did appreciate and admire the wonderfully endowed peasant boy as much as she possibly could in the case of one so immeasurably far beneath her in rank. And she really did take more pride and delight in the society of Ishmael than in that of any other human being she had ever met. And yet, had it been possible that Ishmael should have been acknowledged by his father and invested with the name, arms, and estate of Brudenell, Claudia Merlin, in her present mood of mind, would have died and seen him die, before she would have given her hand to one upon whose birth a single shade of reproach was even suspected to rest.

It was late in October before Ishmael became well enough to go about upon a crutch and then the judge asked the youth to become his private secretary. He was installed in a comfortable leather chair in the library, with his crutch beside him and a writing table covered with letters to be read and answered before him. These letters were all open, and each had a word or a line penciled upon it indicating the character of the answer that was to be given. Upon some

vas simply written the word "No"; upon others, "Yes"; upon ›thers again, "Call on me when I come to town"; and so 'orth. All this, of course Ishmael had to put into courteous anguage, using his own judgment after reading the letters.

Of course it was the least important part of his correspond-ence that Judge Merlin put into his young assistant's hands; ›ut, notwithstanding that, the trust was a very responsible one. Even Ishmael doubted whether he could discharge such un-familiar duties with satisfaction to his employer.

He worked diligently all that day, however, and completed he task that had been laid out for him before the bell rang 'or the late dinner. Then he arose and respectfully called the udge's attention to the finished work, and bowed and left the oom.

With something like curiosity and doubt the judge went up o the table and opened and read three or four of the letters vritten for him by this young amanuensis. And as he read, urprise and pleasure lighted up his countenance.

"The boy is a born diplomatist! I should not wonder if the world should hear of him some day, after all!" he said, as he ead letter after letter that had been left unsealed for his ›ptional perusal. In these letters he found his own hard 'No's" expressed with courtesy that softened them even to he most bitterly disappointed; his arrogant "Yes's," with a delicacy that could not wound the self-love of the most sen-itive petitioner; and his intermediate, doubtful answers ren-dered with a clearness of which by their very nature they eemed incapable.

"The boy is a born diplomatist," repeated the judge in an ccession of astonishment.

But he was wrong in his judgment of Ishmael. If the outh's style of writing was gracious, courteous, delicate, it vas because his inmost nature was pure, refined, and be-ignant. If his letters denying favors soothed rather than offended the applicant, and if those granting favors flattered ather than humiliated the petitioner, it was because of that ngelic attribute of Ishmael's soul that made it so painful to im to give pain, so delightful to impart delight. There was o thought of diplomatic dealing in all Ishmael's truthful oul.

The judge was excessively pleased with his young assistant. udge Merlin was an excellent lawyer, but no orator, and ever had been, nor could be one. He had not himself the ift of eloquence either in speaking or writing; and, therefore,

perhaps he was the more astonished and pleased to find it in the possession of his letter-writer. He was pleased to have his correspondence well written, for it reflected credit upon himself.

CHAPTER XXIV

NEW LIFE

When the judge met his daughter at dinner that evening he informed her that he intended to continue Ishmael as his secretary and to take him for that purpose to Washington.

"And he is to remain with us until we go to town?"

"Yes, my dear; but you seem to demur, Claudia. Now what is the matter? What possible objection can there be to Ishmael Worth remaining here as my assistant until we go to town?"

"Papa, it will be accustoming him to a society and style that will make it very hard for him to return to the company of the ignorant men and women who have hitherto been his associates," said Claudia.

"But why should he return to them? Young Worth is very talented and well educated. He works to enable him to study a profession. There is no reason on earth why he should not succeed. He looks like a gentleman, talks like a gentleman, and behaves like a gentleman! And there is nothing to prevent his becoming a gentleman."

"Oh, yes, there is, papa! Yes, there is!" exclaimed Claudia with emotion.

"To what do you allude, my dear?"

"To his—low birth, papa!" exclaimed Claudia, with a gasp.

"His low birth? Claudia! do we live in a republic or not? If we do, what is the use of our free institutions, if a deserving young man is to be despised on account of his birth? Claudia, in the circle of my acquaintance there are at least half-a-dozen prosperous men who were the sons of poor but respectable parents."

"Yes! poor, but—respectable!" ejaculated Claudia, with exceeding bitterness.

"My daughter, what do you mean by that? Surely young Worth's family are honest people?" inquired the judge.

"Ishmael's parents were not respectable! his mother was never married! I heard this years ago, but did not believe it

I heard it confirmed to-day!" cried Claudia, with a gasp and a sob, as she sank back in her chair and covered her burning face with her hands.

The judge laid down his knife and fork and gazed at his daughter, muttering:

"That is unfortunate; very unfortunate! No, he will never get over that reproach; so far, you are right, Claudia."

"Oh, no, I am wrong; basely wrong! He saved my life, and I speak these words of him, as if he were answerable for the sins of others—as if his great misfortune was his crime! Poor Ishmael! Poor, noble-hearted boy! He saved my life, papa, at the price of deadly peril and terrible suffering to himself. Oh, reward him well, lavishly, munificently; but send him away! I cannot bear his presence here!" exclaimed the excited girl.

"Claudia, it is natural that you should be shocked at hearing such a piece of news; which, true or false, certainly ought never to have been brought to your ear. But, my dear, there is no need of all this excitement on your part. I do not understand its excess. The youth is a good, intelligent, well-mannered boy, when all is said. Of course he can never attain the position of a gentleman; but that is no reason why he should be utterly cast out. And as to sending him away, now, there are several reasons why I cannot do that: In the first place, he is not able to go; in the second, I need his pen; in the third, I have made an engagement with him which I will not break. As for the rest, Claudia, you need not be troubled with a sight of him; I will take care that he does not intrude upon your presence," said the judge, as he arose from the table.

Claudia threw on her garden hat and hurried out of the house to bury herself in the shadows of the forest. That day she had learned, from the gossip of old Mrs. Jones, who was on a visit to a married daughter in the neighborhood, Ishmael's real history, or what was supposed to be his real history. She had struggled for composure all day long, and only utterly lost her self-possession in the conversation with her father at the dinner-table. Now she sought the depths of the forest, because she could not bear the sight of a human face. Her whole nature was divided and at war with itself. All that was best in Claudia Merlin's heart and mind was powerfully and constantly attracted by the moral and intellectual excellence of Ishmael Worth; but all the prejudices of her rank and education were revolted by the circumstances

attending his birth, and were up in arms against the emotions of her better nature.

The last two weeks in November were devoted by the judge and his family to preparations for their departure.

As the time slipped and the interval of their stay grew shorter and shorter, Ishmael began to count the days, treasuring each precious day that still gave him to the sight of Claudia.

On the last day but one before their departure, all letters having been finished, the judge was in his library, selecting books to be packed and sent off to his city residence. Ishmael was assisting him. When their task was completed, the judge turned to the youth and said:

"Now, Ishmael, I will leave the keys of the library in your possession. You will come occasionally to see that all is right here; and you will air and dust the books, and in wet weather have a fire kindled to keep them from molding, for in the depths of this forest it is very damp in winter. In recompense for your care of the library, Ishmael, I will give you the use of such law books as you may need to continue your studies. Here is a list of works that I recommend you to read in the order in which they are written down," said the judge, handing the youth a folded paper.

"I thank you, sir; I thank you very much," answered Ishmael fervently.

"You can either read them here or take them home with you, just as you please," continued the judge.

"You are very kind, and I am very grateful, sir."

"It seems to me I am only just, and scarcely that, Ishmael! The county court opens at Shelton on the first of December. I would strongly recommend you to attend its sessions, and watch its trials; it will be a very good school for you, and a great help to the progress of your studies."

"Thank you, sir, I will follow your advice."

"And after a while you will be able to go for a term or two to one of the good Northern law schools."

"I hope so, sir; and for that purpose I must work hard."

"And if you should ever succeed in getting admitted to the bar, Ishmael, I should advise you to go to the Far West. It may seem premature to give you this counsel now, but I give it, while I think of it, because after parting with you I may never see you again."

"Again I thank you, Judge Merlin; but if ever that day of success should come for me, it will find me in my native State.

I have an especial reason for fixing my home here; and here I must succeed or fail!" said Ishmael earnestly, as he thought of his mother's early death and unhonored grave, and his vow to rescue her memory from reproach.

"It appears to me that your native place would be the last spot on earth where you, with your talents, would consent to remain," said the judge significantly.

"I have a reason—a sacred reason, sir," replied Ishmael earnestly, yet with some reserve in his manner.

"A reason 'with which the stranger intermeddleth not,' I suppose?"

Ishmael bowed gravely, in assent.

On the following Saturday morning the judge and his daughter left Tanglewood for Washington. They traveled in the private carriage driven by the heroic Sam, and attended by a mounted groom. The parting, which shook Ishmael's whole nature like a storm, nearly rending soul and body asunder, seemed to have but little effect upon Miss Merlin. She went through it with great decorum, shaking hands with Ishmael, wishing him success, and hoping to see him, some fine day, on the bench!

This Claudia said laughing, as with good-humored raillery.

But Ishmael bowed very gravely, and though his heart was breaking, answered calmly:

"I hope so too, Miss Merlin. We shall see."

"Au revoir!" said Claudia, her eyes sparkling with mirth.

"Until we meet!" answered Ishmael solemnly, as he closed the carriage door and gave the coachman the word to drive off.

As the carriage rolled away the beautiful girl, who was its sole passenger, and whose eyes had been sparkling with mirth but an instant before, now threw her hands up to her face, fell back in her seat, and burst into a tempest of sobs and tears.

Ignorant of what was going on within its curtained inclosure, Ishmael remained standing and gazing after the vanishing carriage, which was quickly lost to view in the deep shadows of the forest road, until Judge Merlin, who at the last moment had decided to travel on horseback, rode up to take leave of him and follow the carriage.

"Well, good-by, my young friend! Take care of yourself," were the last adieus of the judge, as he shook hands with Ishmael, and rode away.

"I wish you a pleasant journey, sir," were the final words of Ishmael, sent after the galloping horse.

Then the young man, with desolation in his heart, turned into the house to set the library in order, lock it up, and remove his own few personal effects from the premises.

Reuben Gray, who had come up to assist the judge, receive his final orders, and see him off, waited outside with his light wagon to take Ishmael and his luggage home to Woodside. Reuben helped Ishmael to transfer his books, clothing, etc., to the little wagon. And then Ishmael, after having taken leave of Aunt Katie, and left a small present in her hand, jumped into his seat and was driven off by Reuben.

The arrangement at Tanglewood had occupied nearly the whole of the short winter forenoon, so that it was twelve o'clock meridian when they reached Woodside.

They found a very comfortable sitting room awaiting them. Reuben in the pride of his paternity had refurnished it. There was a warm red carpet on the floor; warm red curtains at the windows; a bright fire burning in the fireplace; a neat dinner-table set out, and, best of all, Hannah seated in a low rocking chair, with one rosy babe on her lap and another in the soft, white cradle bed by her side. Hannah laid the baby she held beside its brother in the cradle, and arose and went to Ishmael, warmly welcoming him home again, saying:

"Oh, my dear boy, I am so glad you have come back! I will make you happier with us, lad, than you have ever been before."

"You have always been very good to me, Aunt Hannah," said Ishmael warmly, returning her embrace.

CHAPTER XXV

RUSHY SHORE

The first thing Ishmael did when he found himself again settled at Woodside, and had got over the anguish of his parting with Claudia and the excitement of his removal from Tanglewood, was to walk over to Rushy Shore and inquire of Overseer Brown whether a master had yet been heard of for the little school. The opportunity was still open and arrangements were made for him to begin school in January.

School opened as duly announced, and, in this persevering labor Ishmael cheerfully passed the winter months.

He had not heard one word of Claudia, or of her father, except such scant news as reached him through the judge's occasional letters to the overseer. But, he had also received an encouraging note from Mr. Middleton in answer to the letter he had written to that gentleman.

One evening about the middle of April Ishmael sat at his school desk mending pens, setting copies, and keeping an eye on a refractory boy who had been detained after school hours to learn a lesson he had failed to know in his class.

Ishmael had just finished setting his last copy and was engaged in piling the copy-books neatly, one on top of another, when there came a soft tap at the door.

"Come in," said Ishmael, fully expecting to see some of the refractory boy's friends come to inquire after him.

The door opened and a very young lady, in a gray silk dress, straw hat, and blue ribbons entered the schoolroom.

Ishmael looked up, gave one glance at the fair, sweet face, serious blue eyes, and soft light ringlets, and dropped his copy-books, came down from his seat and hurried to meet the visitor, exclaiming:

"Bee! Oh, dear, dear Bee, I am so glad to see you!"

"So am I you, Ishmael," said Beatrice Middleton, frankly giving her hand to be shaken.

"Bee! oh, I beg pardon! Miss Middleton I mean! it is such a happiness to me to see you again!"

"So it is to me to see you, Ishmael," frankly answered Beatrice.

"You will sit down and rest, Bee?—Miss Middleton!" exclaimed Ishmael, running to bring his own school chair for her accommodation.

"I will sit down, Bee. None of my old schoolmates call me anything else, Ishmael, and I should hardly know my little self by any other name," said Bee, taking the offered seat.

"I thank you very much for letting me call you so! It really went against all old feelings of friendship to call you otherwise."

"Why certainly it did."

"I hope your father and all the family are well?"

"All except mamma, who, you know, is very delicate."

"Yes, I know. They are all down here of course?"

"No; no one but myself and one man- and maid-servant."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; I came down to see to the last preparations, so as to have everything in order and comfortable for mamma when she comes."

"When did you reach Rushy Shore, Bee?"

"Last night about seven o'clock. Matty came with me in the carriage, and Jason drove us. We spent all day in unpacking and arranging the things that had been sent down on the *Canvas Back* a week or two ago. And this afternoon I thought I would walk over here and see what sort of a school you had. Papa read your letter to us, and we were all interested in your success here."

"Thank you, dear Bee; I know that you are all among my very best friends; and some of these days, Bee, I hope, I trust, to do credit to your friendship."

"That you will, Ishmael! What do you think my papa told my uncle Merlin?—that 'that young man (meaning you) was destined to make his mark on this century.'"

A deep blush of mingled pleasure, bashfulness, and aspiration mantled Ishmael's delicate face. He bowed with sweet, grave courtesy, and changed the subject of conversation by saying:

"I hope Judge Merlin and his daughter are quite well?"

"Quite. They are still at Annapolis. Papa visited them there for a few days last week. The judge is stopping at the Stars and Stripes hotel, and Claudia is a parlor boarder at a celebrated French school in the vicinity. Claudia will not 'come out' until next winter, when her father goes to Washington. For next December Claudia will be eighteen years of age, and will enter upon her mother's large property according to the terms of the marriage settlement and the mother's will. I suppose she will be the richest heiress in America, for the property is estimated at more than a million! Ah! it is fine to be Claudia Merlin—is it not, Ishmael?"

"Very," answered the young man, scarcely conscious amid the whirl of his emotions of what he was saying.

"And what a sensation her entrée into society will make! I should like to be in Washington next winter when she comes out. Ah, but after all—what a target for fortune-hunters she will be, to be sure!" sighed Bee.

"She is beautiful and accomplished, and altogether lovely enough to be sought for herself alone!" exclaimed Ishmael, in the low and faltering tones of deep feeling.

"Ah, yes, if she were poor; but who on earth could

ee whether the heiress of a million were pretty or plain, good r bad, witty or stupid?"

"So young and so cynical!" said Ishmael sadly.

"Ah, Ishmael, whoever reads and observes must feel and eflect; and whoever feels and reflects must soon lose the imple faith of childhood. We shall see!" said Bee, rising nd drawing her gray silk scarf around her shoulders.

"You are not going?"

"Yes; I have much yet to do."

"Can I not help you?"

"Oh, no; there is nothing that I have to do that a classical nd mathematical scholar and nursling lawyer could under-tand."

"Then, at least, allow me to see you safely home. The nursling-lawyer can do that, I suppose? If you will be pleased to sit down until I hear this young hopeful say his esson, I will close up the schoolroom and be at your service."

"Thank you very much; but I have to call at Brown's, the overseer's, and I would much rather you would not trouble yourself, Ishmael. Good-by. When we all get settled up at he house, which must be by next Saturday night at farthest, you must come often to see us. It was to say this that I came here."

"Thank you, dearest Bee! I shall esteem it a great privi-ege to come."

"Prove it," laughed Bee, as she waved adieu, and tripped out of the schoolroom.

CHAPTER XXVI

STILL ONWARD

Beatrice did not come again to the schoolroom to see Ish-mael. The memory of old school-day friendship, as well as he prompting of hospitality and benevolence, had brought her here on her first visit. She had not thought of the lapse of ime, or the change that two years must have made in him as vell as in herself, and so, where she expected to find a mere youth, she found a young man; and maiden delicacy re-trained her from repeating her visit.

On Thursday morning, however, as Ishmael was opening his schoolroom he heard a brisk step approaching, and Mr.

Middleton was at his side. Their hands flew into each other and shook mutually before either spoke. Then, with beaming eyes and hearty tones, both exclaimed at once:

"I am so glad to see you!"

"Of course you arrived last night! I hope you had a pleasant journey, and that Mrs. Middleton has recovered her fatigue," said Ishmael, placing a chair for his visitor.

"A very pleasant journey. The day was delightfully cool, and even my wife did not suffer from fatigue. She is quite well this morning, and quite delighted with her new home. But, see here, Ishmael, how you have changed! You are taller than I am! You must be near six feet in height—are you not?"

"I suppose so," smiled Ishmael.

"And your hair is so much darker. Altogether, you are so much improved."

"There was room for it."

"There always is, my boy. Well, I did not come here to pay compliments, my young friend. I came to tell you that, thanks to my little Bee's activity, we are all comfortably settled at home now; and we should be happy if you would come on Friday evening and spend with us Saturday and Sunday, your weekly holidays."

"I thank you, sir; I thank you very much. I should extremely like to come, but—"

"Now, Ishmael, hush! I do not intend to take a denial. When I give an invitation I am very much in earnest about it; and to show you how much I am in earnest about this, I will tell you that I reflected that this was Thursday, and that if I asked you to-day you could tell your friends when you get home this evening, and come to-morrow morning prepared to remain over till Monday. Otherwise if I had not invited you till to-morrow morning, you would have had to walk all the way back home to-morrow evening to tell your friends before coming to see us. So you see how much I wished to have you come, Ishmael, and how I studied ways and means. Mrs. Middleton and all your old schoolmates are equally anxious to see you, so say no more about it, but come!"

"Indeed, I earnestly thank you, Mr. Middleton, and I was not about to decline your kind invitation in toto, but only to say that I am occupied with duties that I cannot neglect on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings; but on Saturday evening I shall be very happy to come over and spend Sunday."

"Very well, then, Ishmael; so be it; I accept so much of your pleasant company, since no more of it is to be had. By the way, Ishmael!"

"Yes, sir."

"That was a gallant feat and a narrow escape of yours as it was described to me by my neice Claudia. Nothing less than the preservation of her life could have justified you in such a desperate act."

"I am grateful to Miss Merlin for remembering it, sir."

"As if she could ever forget it! Good Heavens! Well, Ishmael, I see that your pupils are assembling fast. I will not detain you from your duties longer. Good-morning; and remember that we shall expect you on Saturday evening."

"Good-morning, sir! I will remember; pray give my respects to Mrs. Middleton and all the family."

"Certainly," said Mr. Middleton, as he walked away.

Ishmael re-entered the schoolroom, rang the bell to call the pupils in, and commenced the duties of the day.

On Saturday afternoon, all his weekly labors being scrupulously finished, Ishmael walked over to Rushy Shore Beacon, as Mr. Middleton's house was called.

It was a very large old edifice of white stone, and stood upon the extreme point of a headland running out into the river. There were many trees behind it, landward; but none before it, seaward; so that really the tall white house, with its many windows, might well serve as a beacon to passing vessels.

Around the headland upon which it was situated the waters swept with a mighty impetus and a deafening roar that gave the place its descriptive name of Rushy Shore. As the air and water here were mildly salt, the situation was deemed very healthy and well suited to such delicate lungs as required a stimulating atmosphere, and yet could not bear the full strength of the sea breeezes. As such the place had been selected by Mr. Middleton for the residence of his invalid wife.

When Ishmael approached the house he found the family all assembled in the long front porch to enjoy the fine view.

Walter Middleton, who was the first to spy Ishmael's approach, ran down the steps and out to meet him, exclaiming, as he caught and shook his hand:

"How are you, old boy, how are you? Looking in high health and handsomeness, at any rate! I should have come down to school to see you, Ishmael, only, on the very morn-

ing after our arrival, I had to mount my horse and ride down to Baymouth to attend to some business for my father, and I did not get back until late last night. Come, hurry on to the house! My mother is anxious to see her old favorite."

And so, overpowering Ishmael with the cordiality of his greeting, Walter drew his friend's arm within his own, and took him upon the porch in the midst of the family group, that immediately surrounded and warmly welcomed him.

"How handsome and manly you have grown, my dear," said Mrs. Middleton, with almost motherly pride in her favorite.

Ishmael blushed and bowed in reply to this direct compliment. And soon he was seated among them, chatting pleasantly.

This was but the first of many delightful visits to Rushy Shore enjoyed by Ishmael. Mr. Middleton liked to have him there, and often pressed him to come. And Ishmael, who very well knew the difference between invitations given from mere politeness and those prompted by sincere desire for his company, frequently accepted them.

One day Mr. Middleton, who took a deep interest in the struggles of Ishmael, said to him:

"You should enter some law school, my young friend."

"I intend to do so, sir, as soon as I have accomplished two things."

"And what are they?"

"Saved money enough to defray my expenses and found a substitute for myself as master of this little school."

"Oh, bother the school! you must not always be sacrificing yourself to the public welfare, Ishmael," laughed Mr. Middleton, who sometimes permitted himself to use rough words.

"But to duty, sir?"

"Oh, if you make it a question of duty, I have no more to say," was the concluding remark of Ishmael's friend.

Thus, in diligent labor and intellectual intercourse, the young man passed the summer months.

One bright hope burned constantly before Ishmael's mental vision—of seeing Claudia; but, ah! this hope was destined to be deferred from week to week, and finally disappointed.

Judge Merlin did not come to Tanglewood as usual this summer. He took his daughter to the seaside instead, where

hey lived quietly at a private boarding house, because it vas not intended that Miss Merlin should enter society ntil the coming winter at Washington.

To Ishmael this was a bitter disappointment, but a bitter onic, too, since it served to give strength to his mind.

Late in September his friend Walter Middleton, who was medical student, left them to attend the autumn and win- er course of lectures in Baltimore. Ishmael felt the loss f his society very much; but as usual consoled himself by ard work through all the autumn months.

He heard from Judge Merlin and his daughter through heir letters to the Middletons. They were again in An- apolis, where Miss Merlin was passing her last term at the inishing school, but they were to go to Washington at the neeting of Congress in December.

As the month of November drew to a close Ishmael began o compute the labors, progress, and profits of the year. He found that it would be necessary for him to seek more re- nunerative employment if he should make the progress for which he hoped. Accordingly he tried the experiment f an advertisement.

At length his perseverance was crowned with a success greater than he could have anticipated. It was about the middle of December, a few days before the breaking up of his school for the Christmas holidays, that he called at the Shelton post office and found a fateful answer to his adver- isement. It was from Randolph Merlin, Claudia's father, aying that he was looking for some one qualified to serve s confidential secretary. It was a stroke of fate, or so it eemed to the surprised and excited mind of Ishmael.

Trembling with joy, he retired to the private parlor of he quiet little village inn to answer the letter, so that it night go off to Washington by the mail that started that fternoon. He smiled to himself as he wrote that Judge Merlin himself had had ample opportunity of personally esting the character and ability of the advertiser, but that f further testimony were needed, he begged to refer to Mr. James Middleton, of Rushy Shore. Finally, he left the uestion of the amount of salary to be settled by the judge imself. He signed, sealed, and directed this letter, and urried to the post office to post it before the closing of the nail.

And then he went home in a maze of delight.

Three anxious days passed, and then Ishmael received his

answer. It was a favorable and a conclusive one. The judge told him that from the post office address given in the advertisement, as well as from other circumstances, he had supposed the advertiser to be Ishmael himself, but could not be sure until he had received his letter, when he was glad to find his supposition correct, as he should much rather receive into his family, in a confidential capacity, a known young man like Mr. Worth than any stranger, however well recommended the latter might be; he would fix the salary at three hundred dollars, with board and lodging, if that would meet the young gentleman's views; if the terms suited, he hoped Mr. Worth would lose no time in joining him in Washington, as he, the writer, was overwhelmed with correspondence that was still accumulating.

Ishmael answered this second letter immediately, saying that he would be in Washington on the following Tuesday.

After posting his letter he walked rapidly homeward, calling at Rushy Shore on his way to inform his friends, the Middletons, of his change of fortune.

Upon this afternoon he reached Rushy Shore just as the family were sitting down to dinner. They were as much surprised as pleased to see him at such an unusual time as the middle of the week. Mr. Middleton got up to shake hands with him! Mrs. Middleton ordered another plate brought Bee saw that room was made for another chair; and so Ishmael was welcomed by acclamation, and seated among them at the table.

"And now, young gentleman, tell us what it all means For glad as we are to see you, and glad as you are to see us, we know very well that you did not take time to come here in the middle of the week merely to please yourself or us; pleasure not being your first object in life, Ishmael,' said Mr. Middleton.

"I regret to say, that I came to tell you, I am going away on Monday morning," replied Ishmael gravely, for at the moment he felt a very real regret at the thought of leaving such good and true friends.

"Going away!" exclaimed all the family in a breath, and in consternation; for this boy, with his excellent character and charming manners had always deeply endeared himself to all his friends. "Going away!" they repeated.

"I am sorry to say it," said Ishmael.

"But this is so unexpected, so sudden!" said Mrs. Middleton.

"What the grand deuce is the matter? Have you enlisted or a soldier, engaged as a sailor, been seized with the gold ever?"

"Neither, sir! I will explain," said Ishmael. And forthwith he told all his plans and prospects, in the fewest possible words.

"And so you are going to Washington, to be Randolph Merlin's clerk! Well, Ishmael, as he is a thorough lawyer, though no very brilliant barrister, I do not know that you could be in a better school. Heaven prosper you, my lad! By the way, Ishmael, just before you came in, we were all talking of going to Washington ourselves."

"Indeed; and is there really a prospect of your going?" inquired Ishmael, in pleased surprise.

"Well, yes. You see the judge wishes a chaperon for his daughter this winter, and has invited Mrs. Middleton, and in fact all the family, to come and spend the season with them in Washington. He says that he has taken the old Washington House, which is large enough to accommodate our united families, and ten times as many."

"And you will go?" inquired Ishmael anxiously.

"Well, yes—I think so. You see, this place, so preeminently healthy during eight months of the year, is rather too much exposed and too bleak in the depth of winter to suit my wife. She begins to cough already. And as Claudia really does need a matronly friend near her, and as the judge is very anxious for us to come, I think all interests will be best served by our going."

"I hope you will go very soon," said Ishmael.

"In a week or ten days," replied Mr. Middleton.

CHAPTER XXVII

CLAUDIA'S CITY HOME

Just north of the Capitol park, upon a gentle eminence, within its own well-shaded and well-cultivated grounds, stood a fine, old, family mansion that had once been the temporary residence of George Washington.

The house was very large, with many spacious rooms and broad passages within, and many garden walks and trellised arbors around it.

In front were so many evergreen trees and in the rear was so fine a conservatory of blooming flowers, that even in the depth of winter it seemed like summer there.

The house was so secluded within its many thick trees and high garden walls that the noise of the city never reached its inmates, though they were within five minutes' walk of the Capitol and ten minutes' drive of the President's mansion.

Judge Merlin had been very fortunate in securing for the season this delightful home, where he could be within easy reach of his official business and at the same time enjoy the quiet so necessary to his temperament.

That winter he had been appointed one of the judges of the Supreme Court of the United States, and it was very desirable to have so pleasant a dwelling place within such easy reach of the Capitol, where the court was held. At the head of this house his young daughter had been placed as its mistress. She had not yet appeared anywhere in public. She was reserving herself for two events: the arrival of her chaperon and the first evening reception of the President. Her presence in the city was not even certainly known beyond her own domestic circle; though a vague rumor, started no one knew by whom, was afloat, to the effect that Miss Merlin, the young Maryland heiress and beauty, was expected to come out in Washington during the current season.

Meanwhile she remained in seclusion in her father's house.

It was to this delightful town house, so like the country in its isolation, that Ishmael Worth was invited.

It was just at sunrise on Tuesday morning that the old steamer *Columbia,* having Ishmael on board, landed at the Seventh Street wharf, and the young man, destined some future day to fill a high official position in the Federal government, took his humble carpetbag in his hand and entered the Federal city.

Ah! many thousands had entered the National capital before him, and many more thousands would enter it after him, only to complain of it, to carp over it, to laugh at it, for its "magnificent distances," its unfinished buildings, its muddy streets, and its mean dwellings.

But Ishmael entered within its boundaries with feelings of reverence and affection. It was the City of Washington, the sacred heart of the nation.

"Can you tell me the nearest way to Pennsylvania Avenue?" at length he asked of a bystander.

"Just set your face to the north and follow your nose for about a mile, and you'll fetch up to the broadest street as ever you see; and that will be it," was the answer.

With this simple direction Ishmael went on until he came to the avenue, which he recognized at once from the description.

The Capitol, thronged in majestic grandeur upon the top of its wooded hill at the eastern extremity of the Avenue, and gleaming white in the rays of the morning sun, seeming to preside over the whole scene, next attracted Ishmael's admiration. As his way lay towards it, he had ample time to contemplate its imposing magnificence and beauty.

As he drew near it, however, he began to throw his eyes around the surrounding country in search of Judge Merlin's house. He soon identified it—a large old family mansion, standing in a thick grove of trees on a hill just north of the Capitol grounds. He turned to the left, ascended the hill, and soon found himself at the iron gate leading to the grounds.

Here his old acquaintance, Sam, being on duty as porter, admitted him, and, taking him by a winding gravel walk that turned and twisted among groves and parterres, led him up to the house and delivered him into the charge of a black footman, who was at that early hour engaged in opening the doors and windows.

He was the same Jim who used to wait on the table at Tanglewood.

"Good-morning, Mr. Ishmael, sir," he said, advancing in a friendly and respectful manner, to receive the new arrival.

"The judge expected me this morning, Jim?" inquired Ishmael, when he had returned the greeting of the man.

"Oh, yes, sir; and ordered your room got ready for you. The family ain't down yet, sir; but I can show you your room," said Jim, taking Ishmael's carpetbag from him, and leading the way upstairs.

They went up three flights of stairs, to a small front room in the third story, with one window, looking west.

Here Jim set down the carpetbag, saying:

"It's rather high up, sir; but you see we are expecting Mrs. Middleton and all her family, and of course the best spare rooms has to be given up to the ladies. I think you will find everything you could wish for at hand, sir; but if there should be anything else wanted, you can ring, and one of the

men servants will come up." And with this, Jim bowed and left the room.

Ishmael looked around upon his new domicile.

It was a very plain room with simple maple furniture, neatly arranged; a brown woolen carpet on the floor; white dimity curtains at the window; and a small coal fire in the grate. Yet it was much better than Ishmael had been accustomed to at home, and besides, the elevated position of the room, and the outlook from the only window, compensated for all deficiencies.

Ishmael walked up to this window, put aside the dainty white curtain, and looked forth: the whole city of Washington, Georgetown, the winding of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers, Anacostia Island, and the undulating hills of the Virginia and Maryland shores lay spread like a vast panorama before him.

As the thicket was a necessity to Judge Merlin's nature, so the widely extended prospect was a need of Ishmael's spirit; his eyes must travel when his feet could not.

Feeling perfectly satisfied with his quarters, Ishmael at last left the window and made his toilet, preparatory to meeting the judge and—Claudia!

He had completed his toilet, and was engaged in lightly brushing some lint from his coat, when a knock at his door attracted his attention.

It was Jim, who had come to announce breakfast and show him the way to the morning room.

Down the three flights of stairs they went again, and across the central hall to a front room on the left that looked out upon the winter garden of evergreen trees. Crimson curtained and crimson carpeted, with a bright coal fire in the polished steel grate, and a glittering silver service on the white draped breakfast table, this room had a very inviting aspect on this frosty December morning.

The judge stood with his back to the fire, and a damp newspaper open in his hand. Claudia was nowhere visible—a hasty glance around the room assured Ishmael that she had not yet entered it. Ishmael's movements were so noiseless that his presence was not observed until he actually went up to the judge, and, bowing, accosted him with the words:

"I am here according to appointment, Judge Merlin; and hope I find you well."

"Ah, yes; good-morning! how do you do, Ishmael?" said

the judge laying aside his paper and cordially shaking hands with the youth. "Punctual, I see. Had a pleasant journey?"

"Thank you, sir; very pleasant," returned Ishmael.

"Feel like setting to work this morning? There is quite an accumulation of correspondence groaning to be attended to."

"I am ready to enter upon my duties whenever you please, sir."

"All right," said the judge, touching a bell that presently summoned Jim to his presence.

"Let us have breakfast immediately. Where is Miss Merlin? Let her know that we are waiting for her."

"'Miss Merlin' is here, papa," said a rich voice at the door.

Ishmael's heart bounded and throbbed, and Claudia entered the breakfast room.

Such a picture of almost Oriental beauty, luxury, and splendor as she looked! She wore a morning robe of rich crimson foulard silk, fastened up the front with garnet buttons, each a spark of fire. The dress was open at the throat and wrists, revealing glimpses of the delicate cambric collar and cuffs confined by the purest pearl studs. Her luxuriant hair was carried away from her snowy temples and drooped in long, rich, purplish, black ringlets from the back of her stately head. But her full, dark eyes and oval crimson cheeks and lips glowed with a fire too vivid for health as she advanced and gave her father the morning kiss.

"I am glad you have come, my dear! I have been waiting for you!" said the judge.

"You shall not have to do so another morning, papa," she answered.

"Here is Ishmael, Claudia," said her father, directing her attention to the youth, who had delicately withdrawn into the background; but who, at the mention of his own name, came forward to pay his respects to the heiress.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Worth," she said, extending her hand to him as he bowed before her; and then quickly detecting a passing shade of pain in his expressive face, she added, smiling:

"You know we must begin to call you Mr. Worth sometime, and there can be no better time than this, when you make your first appearance in the city and commence a new career in life."

"I had always hoped to be 'Ishmael' with my friends," he replied.

"'Times change and we change with them,' said one of the wisest of sages," smiled Claudia.

After breakfast the judge led Ishmael upstairs to a sort of office or study, immediately over the breakfast room, having an outlook over the Capitol grounds, and fitted up with a few book-cases, writing desks, and easy-chairs.

The judge drew a chair to the central table, which was covered with papers, and motioned Ishmael to take another seat at the same table. As soon as Ishmael obeyed, Judge Merlin began to initiate him into his new duties, which, in fact, were so much of the same description with those in which he had been engaged at Tanglewood, that he very soon understood and entered upon them.

The first few days of Ishmael's sojourn were very busy ones. There was a great arrearage of correspondence; and he worked diligently, day and night, until he had brought up all arrears to the current time.

When this was done, and he had but two mails to attend to in one day, he found that five hours in the morning and five in the evening sufficed for the work, and left him ample leisure for the pursuit of his legal studies, and he devoted himself to them, both by diligent reading and by regular attendance upon the sessions of the circuit court, where he watched, listened, and took notes, comparing the letters with the readings. Of course he could not do all this without reducing his labors to a perfect system, and he could not constantly adhere to this system without practicing the severest self-denial.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HEIRESS AND BEAUTY

MEANWHILE all Claudia Merlin's time was taken up with milliners, mantua makers, and jewelers. She was to make her first appearance in society at the President's first evening reception, which was to be held on Friday, the sixth of January. It was now very near the New Year, and all her intervening time was occupied in preparations for the festivities that were to attend it.

On the twenty-third of December, Mr. and Mrs. Middle

ton and all their family arrived. They came up by the *Columbia,* and reached Judge Merlin's house early in the morning. Consequently they were not fatigued, and the day of their arrival was a day of unalloyed pleasure and of family jubilee.

Ishmael took sympathetic part in all the rejoicings, and was caressed by Mr. and Mrs. Middleton and all their younger children as a sort of supplementary son and brother.

Christmas morning dawned gloriously. And the little Middleton's were made happy by the fruit of the Christmas tree. In the many kind interchanges of gifts Ishmael was not entirely forgotten. Some loving heart had remembered him. Some skillful hand had worked for him. When he went up to his room after breakfast on Christmas morning, he saw upon his dressing table a packet directed to himself. On opening it he found a fine pocket-handkerchief neatly hemmed and marked, a pair of nice gloves, a pair of home-knit socks, and a pair of embroidered slippers. Here was no useless fancy trumpery; all were useful articles; and in the old-fashioned, housewifely present Ishmael recognized the thoughtful heart and careful hand of Bee, and grateful, affectionate tears filled his eyes. He went below stairs to a back parlor, where he felt sure he should find Bee presiding over the indoor amusements of her younger brothers and sisters.

And, sure enough, there the pretty little motherly maiden was among the children.

Ishmael went straight up to her, saying, in fervent tones:

"I thank you, Bee; I thank you for remembering me."

"Why, who should remember you if not I, Ishmael? Are you not like one of ourselves? And should I forget you any sooner than I should forget Walter, or James, or John?" said Bee, with a pleasant smile.

"Ah, Bee! I have neither mother nor sister to think of me at festive times; but you, dear Bee, you make me forget the need of either."

A few evenings later Claudia produced an unintended sensation when she attended a drawing-room reception at the White House. There she met a handsome young Englishman who became greatly interested in her. The next morning when they gathered in the dining room, the subject came unexpectedly to the front.

"You may ring for breakfast, Claudia, my dear," said the judge. "We will not wait for your aunt, since your uncle tells us that she is too tired to rise this morning."

But as Bee had already rung, the coffee and muffins were soon served, and the family gathered around the table.

Beside Claudia's plate lay a weekly paper, which, as soon as she had helped her companions to coffee, she took up and read. It was a lively gossiping little paper of that day, published every Saturday morning, under the somewhat sounding title of "The Republican Court Journal," and it gave, in addition to the news of the world, the doings of the fashionable circles. This number of the paper contained a long description of the President's drawing room of the preceding evening. And as Claudia read it, she smiled and broke into silvery laughter. Every one looked up.

"What is it, my dear?" inquired the judge.

"Let us have it, Claudia," said Mr. Middleton.

"Oh, papa! oh, uncle! I really cannot read it out—it is too absurd! Is there no way, I wonder, of stopping these reporters from giving their auction-book schedule of one's height, figure, complexion, and all that? Here, Bee—you read it, my dear," said Claudia, handing it to her cousin.

Bee took the paper and cast her eyes over the article in question; but as she did so her cheeks crimsoned with blushes, and she laid the paper down.

"Read it, Bee," said Claudia.

"I cannot," answered Beatrice coldly.

"Why not?"

"It makes my eyes burn to even see it! Oh, Claudia, how dare they take such liberties with your name?"

"Why, every word of it is praise—high praise."

"It is fulsome, offensive flattery."

"Oh, you jealous little imp!" said Miss Merlin, laughing.

"Yes, Claudia, I am jealous! not of you; but for you—for your delicacy and dignity," said Beatrice gravely.

"And you think, then, I have been wronged by this public notice?" inquired the heiress, half wounded and half offended by the words of her cousin.

"I do," answered Beatrice gravely.

"As if I cared! Queens of society, like other sovereigns, must be so taxed for their popularity, Miss Middleton!" said Claudia, half laughingly and half defiantly.

Bee made no reply.

But Mr. Middleton extended his hand, saying:

"Give me the paper. Claudia is a little too independent, and Bee a little too fastidious, for either to be a fair judge of what is right and proper in this matter; so we will see for ourselves."

Judge Merlin nodded assent.

Mr. Middleton read the article aloud. It was really a very ively description of the President's evening reception—inter-sting to those who had not been present; more interesting to hose who had; and most interesting of all to those who ound themselves favorably noticed. To the last-mentioned he notice was fame—for a day. The article was two or three olumns in length; but we will quote only a few lines. One paragraph said:

"Among the distinguished guests present was the young Viscount Vincent, eldest son and heir of the earl of Hurst-nonceaux and Banff. He was presented by the British min-ster."

Another paragraph alluded to Claudia in these terms:

"The belle of the evening, beyond all competition, was the eautiful Miss M—n, only daughter and heiress of Judge M—n, of the Supreme Court. It will be remembered that he blood of Pocahontas runs in this young beauty's veins, iving luster to her raven black hair, light to her dusky yes, fire to her brown cheeks, and majesty and grace to all er movements. She is truly an Indian princess."

"Well!" said Mr. Middleton, laying down the paper, "I gree with Bee. It is really too bad to be trotted out in this vay, and have all your points indicated, and then be dubbed vith a fancy name besides. Why, Miss Merlin, they will all you the 'Indian Princess' to the end of time, or of your Washington campaign."

Claudia tossed her head.

"What odds?" she said. "I am rather proud to be of the oyal lineage of Powhatan. They may call me Indian prin-ess, if they like. I will accept the title."

"Until you get a more legitimate one!" laughed Mr. Mid-leton.

"Until I get a more legitimate one," assented Claudia.

"But I will see McQuill, the reporter of the 'Journal,' and sk him as a particular favor to leave my daughter's name ut of his next balloon full of gas!" laughed the judge, as e arose from the table.

The other members of the family followed. And each ent about his or her own particular business. This day eing the next following the first appearance of Miss Merlin n society, was passed quietly in the family.

The next day, being Sunday, they all attended church.

But on Monday, a continual stream of visitors arrived, and a great number of cards were left at Judge Merlin's door.

In the course of a week Claudia returned all these calls, and thus she was fairly launched into a fashionable life.

She received numerous invitations to dinners, evening parties, and balls; but all these she civilly excused herself from attending; for it was her whim to give a large party before going to any. To this end, she forced her Aunt Middleton to issue cards and make preparations on a grand scale for a very magnificent ball.

"It must eclipse everything else that has been done, or can be done, this season!" said Claudia.

"We must have the best people."

"Certainly."

"We must invite the diplomatic corps."

"By all means."

"And—all foreigners of distinction, who may be present in the city."

"We must not forget to invite—"

"Who, my dear?"

"Lord Vincent."

"Humph! Has he called here?"

"He left his card a week ago."

The day succeeding this conversation the cards of invitation to the Merlin ball were issued.

And in ten days the ball came off.

It was—as Miss Merlin had resolved it should be—the most splendid affair of the kind that has ever been seen in Washington, before or since. It cost a small fortune, of course, but it was unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Even to this day it is remembered as the great ball. As Claudia had determined, Vourienne superintended the decorations of the reception, dancing, and supper rooms; Devizac furnished the refreshment, and Dureezie the music. The élite of the city were present. The guests began to assemble at ten o'clock, and by eleven the rooms were crowded.

Among the guests was he for whom all this pageantry had been got up—the Viscount Vincent.

Bee took a look through the crowd, and not seeing Ishmael, glided like a spirit on through, passed from the room, and went upstairs, flight after flight, until she reached the third floor, and rapped at Ishmael's door.

"Come in," said the rich, deep, sweet voice—always sweet

n its tones, whether addressing man, woman, or child—
uman being or dumb brute; "come in."
Bee entered the little chamber, so dark after the lighted
ooms below.
In the recess of the dormer window, at a small table lighted
y one candle, sat Ishmael, bending over an open volume. His
neek was pale, his expression weary. He looked up, and
ecognizing Bee, arose with a smile to meet her.
"How dark you are up here, all alone, Ishmael," she said,
oming forward.
"What are you doing up here alone, Ishmael?" she in-
uired, with her hand upon the back of the chair that she
mitted to take.
"I am studying 'Kent's Commentaries,'" answered the
oung man.
"I wish you would study your own health a little more,
shmael! Why are you not down with us?"
"My dear Bee, I am better here."
"Nonsense, Ishmael! You are here too much. You con-
ne yourself too closely to study. You should remember
ie plain old proverb—proverbs are the wisdom of nations,
ou know—the old proverb which says: 'All work and no
lay makes Jack a dull boy.' Come!"
"My dear friend, Bee, you must excuse me."
"But I will not."
"Bee——"
"I insist upon your coming, Ishmael."
"Bee, do not. I should be the wrong man in the wrong
lace."
"Now, why do you say that?"
"Because I have no business in a ballroom, Bee."
"You have as much business there as anyone else."
"What should I do there, Bee?"
"Dance! waltz! polka! At our school balls you were one
f the best dancers we had, I recollect. Now, with your
emory and your ear for music, you would do as well as
ien."
"But who would dance with me in Washington, dear Bee?
am a total stranger to everyone out of this family. And
have no right to ask an introduction to any of the belles,"
id Ishmael.
"I will dance with you, Ishmael, to begin with, if you will
ccept me as a partner. And I do not think you will venture
refuse your little adopted sister and old playmate. Come,
hmael."

"Dear Bee, you constrain me. I will come. Yes, I confess I am glad to be 'constrained.' Sometimes, dear, we require to be compelled to do as we like; or, in other words our consciences require just excuses for yielding certain points to our inclinations. I have been secretly wishing to be with you all the evening. The distant sound of the music has been alluring me very persuasively. I have been longing to join the festivities. And I am glad, my little liege lady, that you lay your royal commands on me to do so."

CHAPTER XXIX

ISHMAEL AT THE BALL

A VERY handsome young fellow was Ishmael Worth as he entered the drawing room that evening. He had attained his full height, over six feet, and he had grown broad-shouldered and full-chested, with the prospect of becoming the athletic man of majestic presence that he appeared in riper years. His hair and eyes were growing much darker; you might now call the first dark brown and the last dark gray. His face was somewhat fuller; but his forehead was still high, broad, and massive, and the line of his profile was clear-cut, distinct, and classic; his lips were full and beautifully curved; and, to sum up, he still retained the peculiar charm of his countenance—the habit of smiling only with his eyes.

He entered the lighted and crowded drawing room very hesitatingly, looking over that splendid but confused assemblage until he caught the eye of Judge Merlin, who immediately came forward to meet him, saying in a low tone:

"I am glad you changed your mind and decided to come down. You must become acquainted with some of my acquaintances. You must make friends, Ishmael, as well as gain knowledge, if you would advance yourself. Come along!"

And the judge led him into the thick of the crowd.

Little more than a year before the judge had said, in speaking of Ishmael: "Of course, owing to the circumstances of his birth, he never can hope to attain the position of a gentleman, never." But the judge had forgotten all about that now. People usually did forget Ishmael's humble origin in his exalted presence. I use the word "exalted"

vith truth, as it applied to his air and manner. The judge ertainly forgot that Ishmael was not Society's gentleman as vell as "nature's nobleman," when, taking him through the rowd, he said:

"I shall introduce you to some young ladies. The first ne I present you to will be Miss Tourneysee, the daughter f General Tourneysee. You must immediately ask her to ance; etiquette will require you to do so."

"But," smiled Ishmael, "I am already engaged to dance he next set with Bee."

"You verdant youth. So, probably, is she—Miss Tourney- ee, I mean—engaged ten sets deep. Ask her for the honor f her hand as soon as she is disengaged," replied the judge, who straightway led Ishmael up to a very pretty young girl, n blue crêpe, to whom he presented the young man in due orm.

Ishmael bowed and proffered his petition.

The case was not so hopeless as the judge had represented t to be. Miss Tourneysee was engaged for the next three ets, but would be happy to dance the fourth with Mr. Worth.

At that moment the partner to whom she was engaged for he quadrille, then forming, came up to claim her hand, and he arose and slightly curtsied to Judge Merlin and Ishmael Worth, and walked away with her companion.

Ishmael looked around for his own lovely partner, and Bee, smiling at a little distance, caught his eye. He bowed o Judge Merlin and went up to her and led her to the head f one of the sets about to be formed.

In the meantime, "Who is he?" whispered many voices, while many eyes followed the stranger who had come among hem.

Among those who observed the entrance of Ishmael was he Viscount Vincent. Half bending, in an elegant attitude, vith his white-gloved hand upon the arm of the sofa where Miss Merlin reclined, he watched the stranger. Presently he said to her:

"Excuse me, but—who is that very distinguished-looking ndividual?"

"Who?" inquired Claudia. She had not noticed the en- rance of Ishmael.

"He who just now came in the room—with Judge Merlin, think. There, he is now standing up, with that pretty little reature in white with the golden ringlets."

"Oh," said Claudia, following his glance. "That 'pretty ttle creature' is my cousin, Miss Middleton."

"I beg ten thousand pardons," said Vincent.

"And her partner," continued Claudia, "is Mr. Worth, a very promising young—" She could not say gentleman; she would not say man; so she hesitated a little while, and then said: "He is a very talented young law student with my papa."

"Ah! do you know that at first I really took him for an old friend of mine, an American gentleman from—Maryland, I believe."

"Mr. Worth is from Maryland," said Claudia.

"Then he is probably a relative of the gentleman in question. The likeness is so very striking; indeed, if it were not that Mr.—Worth, did you say his name was?—is a rather larger man, I should take him to be Mr. Brudenell. I wonder whether they are related?"

"I do not know," said Claudia. And of course she did not know; but notwithstanding that, the hot blood rushed up to her face, flushing it with a deep blush, for she remembered the fatal words that had forever affected Ishmael in her estimation.

"His mother was never married, and no one on earth knows who his father was."

The viscount looked at her; he was a man accustomed to read much in little; but not always aright; he read a great deal in Claudia's deep blush and short reply; but not the whole; he read that Claudia Merlin, the rich heiress, loved her father's poor young law student; but no more; and he resolved to make the acquaintance of the young fellow, who must be related to the Brudenells, he thought, so as to see for himself what there was in him, besides his handsome person, to attract the admiration of Chief Justice Merlin's beautiful daughter.

"He dances well; he carries himself like my friend Herman, also. I fancy they must be nearly related," he continued, as he watched Ishmael going through the quadrille.

"I am unable to inform you whether he is or not," answered Claudia.

While they talked, the dance went on. Presently it was ended.

"You must come up, now, and speak to Claudia. She is the queen of the evening, you know!" said Ishmael's gentle partner.

"I know it, dear Bee; and I am going to pay my respects; but let me find you a seat first," replied the young man.

"No, I will go with you; I have not yet spoken to Claudia this evening," said Bee.

Ishmael offered his arm and escorted her across the room to the sofa that was doing duty as throne for "the queen of the evening."

"I am glad to see you looking well, Bee! Mr. Worth, I hope you are enjoying yourself," was the greeting of Miss Merlin, as they came up.

Then turning towards the viscount, she said:

"Beatrice, my dear, permit me—Lord Vincent, my cousin, Miss Middleton."

A low bow from the gentleman, a slight curtsy from the lady, and that was over.

"Lord Vincent—Mr. Worth," said Claudia.

Two distant bows acknowledged this introduction—so distant that Claudia felt herself called upon to mediate, which she did by saying:

"Mr. Worth, Lord Vincent has been particularly interested in you, ever since you entered the room. He finds a striking resemblance between yourself and a very old friend of his own, who is also from your native county."

Ishmael looked interested, and his smiling eyes turned from Claudia to Lord Vincent in good-humored inquiry.

"I allude to Mr. Herman Brudenell of Brudenell Hall, Maryland, who has been living in England lately. There is a very striking likeness between him and yourself; so striking that I might have mistaken one for the other; but that you are larger, and, now that I see you closely, darker, than he is. Perhaps you are relatives," said Lord Vincent.

"Oh, no; not at all; not the most distant. I am not even acquainted with the gentleman; never set eyes on him in my life!" said Ishmael, smiling ingenuously; for of course he thought he was speaking the exact truth.

But oh, Herman! oh, Nora! if he from the nethermost parts of the earth—if she from the highest heaven could have heard that honest denial of his parentage from the truthful lips of their gifted son!

"There is something incomprehensible in the caprices of nature, in making people who are in no way related so strongly resemble each other," said Lord Vincent.

"There is," admitted Ishmael.

At this moment the music ceased, the dancers left the floor, and there was a considerable movement of the company toward the back of the room.

"I think they are going to supper. Will you permit me

to take you in, Miss Merlin?" said Lord Vincent, offering his arm.

"If you please," said Claudia, rising to take it.

"Shall I have the honor, dear Bee?" inquired Ishmael.

Beatrice answered by putting her hand within Ishmael's arm. And they followed the company to the supper room—scene of splendor, magnificence, and luxury.

CHAPTER XXX

A STEP HIGHER

ISHMAEL took an early opportunity of speaking to the judge of his projects. It was one day when they had gone through the morning's work and were seated in the library together, enjoying a desultory chat before it was time to go to court, that Ishmael said:

"Judge Merlin, I am about to make application to be admitted to practice at the Washington bar."

The judge looked up in surprise.

"Why, Ishmael, you have not graduated at any law school. You have not even had one term of instruction at any such school."

"I know that I have not enjoyed such advantages, sir; but I have read law very diligently for the last three years, and with what memory and understanding I possess, I have profited by my reading."

"But that is not like a regular course of study at a law school."

"Perhaps not, sir; but in addition to my reading, I have had a considerable experience while acting as your clerk."

"So you have; and you have profited by all the experience you have gained while with me. I have seen that; you have acquitted yourself unusually well, and been of very great service to me; but still I insist that law-office business and law-book knowledge is not everything; there is more required to make a good lawyer."

"I know there is, sir; very much more, and I have taken steps to acquire it. For nearly two years I have regularly attended the sessions of the courts, both in St. Mary's county and here in the city, and in that time have learned something of the practice of law," persisted Ishmael. "I

ave made up my mind to be a candidate for admission to ıe Washington bar; and having done so, I would like to get our approbation."

"What do you want with my approbation, boy? With or ithout it, you will get on."

"But more pleasantly with it, sir," smiled Ishmael.

"Very well, very well; take it then. Go ahead. I wish you uccess. But what is the use of telling you to go ahead, when ou will go ahead anyhow, in spite of fate? Or why should wish you success, when I know you will command success? h, Ishmael, you can do without me; but how shall I ever be ble to do without you?" inquired the judge, with an odd xpression between a smile and a sigh.

"My friend and patron, I must be admitted to practice at ıe Washington bar; but I will not upon that account leave our service while I can be of use to you," said Ishmael, with arnestness; for next to adoring Claudia, he loved best for er sake to honor her father.

"That's a good lad. Be sure you keep your promise," said ıe judge, smiling, and laying his hand caressingly on Ishıael's head.

And then as it was time for the judge to go to the Supreme ourt, he arose and departed, leaving Ishmael to write out number of legal documents.

Ishmael lost no time in carrying his resolution into effect. le passed a very successful examination and was duly adıitted to practice in the Washington courts of law.

When Ishmael had completed arrangements for conducting is first case, events came rapidly to a climax in his emotional ffairs. He was defending Mrs. Walsh in a brutal suit rought against her by her wealthy husband. Ishmael arınged for her little girls to stay with Reuben and Hannah ntil the day of trial, and then he left the place of council or a night's rest in his room. It was late when Ishmael eached home, but the drawing-room was ablaze with light, nd as he passed its open door he saw that its only occupants ere the Viscount Vincent and Claudia Merlin. They were gether on the sofa, talking in low, confidential tones. How eautiful she looked! smiling up to the handsome face that as bent in deferential admiration over hers. A pang of love nd jealousy wrung Ishmael's heart as he hurried past and n up the stairs to his den. There he sat down at his desk, nd, bidding vain dreams begone, concentrated his thoughts pon the work before him—the first speech he was to make the bar.

Ishmael worked very hard the day preceding the trial; he took great pains getting up his case, not only for his own sake, but for the sake of that poor mother and her children in whom he felt so deeply interested.

Wednesday morning, as they all sat around the breakfast table, the judge said:

"Well, Ishmael, the case of Walsh versus Walsh comes on to-day, I hear. How do you feel? a little nervous over your first case, eh?"

"Not yet; I feel only great confidence in the justice of my cause, as an earnest of success."

"The justice of his cause! Poor fellow, how much he has to learn yet! Why, Ishmael, how many times have you seen justice overthrown by law?"

"Too many times, sir; but there is no earthly reason why that should happen in this case."

"Have you got your maiden speech all cut and dried and ready to deliver?"

"I have made some notes; but for the rest I shall trust to the inspiration of the instant."

"Bad plan that. 'Spose the inspiration don't come? or 'spose you lose your presence of mind? Better have your speech carefully written off, and then, inspiration or no inspiration, you will be able to read, at least."

"My notes are very carefully arranged; they contain the whole argument."

"And for the rest 'it shall be given ye in that hour, what ye shall speak,'" said Beatrice earnestly.

They all arose and left the table.

"Thank you, dearest Bee," said Ishmael, as he passed her.

"God aid you, Ishmael!" she replied fervently.

He hurried upstairs to collect his documents, and then hastened to the City Hall, where Mrs. Walsh and her children were to meet him.

He found them all in the ante-chamber of the courtroom attended by a bodyguard composed of Reuben, Hannah, and the landlady.

He spoke a few encouraging words to his client, shook hands with the members of her party, and then took them all into the courtroom and showed them their places. The plaintiff was not present. The judges had not yet taken their seats. And the courtroom was occupied only by a few lawyers, clerks, bailiffs, constables, and other officials.

In a few minutes, however, the judges entered and took

heir seats; the crier opened the court, the crowd poured n, the plaintiff with his counsel made his appearance, and he business of the day commenced.

I shall not give all the details of this trial; I shall only glance at a few of them.

The courtroom was full, but not crowded; nothing short of a murder or a divorce case ever draws a crowd to such a place.

Mr. Wiseman, for the plaintiff, opened the case. He was a great, big, bald-headed man, who laid down the law as a blacksmith hammers an anvil, in a clear, forcible, resounding manner, leaving the defense—as everybody declared—not a leg to stand upon.

"Oh, Mr. Worth! it is all over with me, and I shall die!" whispered Mrs. Walsh, in deadly terror.

"Have patience! his speech does not impress the court as it does you—they are used to him."

Witnesses were called, to prove as well as they could from a bad set of facts, what an excellent husband and father the plaintiff had been; how affectionate, how anxious, how zealous he was for the happiness of his wife and children—leaving it to be inferred that nothing on earth but her own evil tendencies instigated the wife to withdraw herself and children from his protection!

"Heaven and earth, Mr. Worth, did you ever hear anything like that? They manage to tell the literal truth, but so pervert it that it is worse than the worse falsehood!" exclaimed Mrs. Walsh, in a low but indignant tone.

"Aye," answered Ishmael, who sat, pencil and tablets in hand, taking notes; "aye! 'a lie that is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies. But the court is accustomed to such witnesses; they do not receive so much credit as you or they think."

Ishmael did not cross-examine these witnesses; the great mass of rebutting testimony that he could bring forward, he knew, must overwhelm them. So when the last witness for the plaintiff had been examined, he whispered a few cheering words to the trembling woman by his side, and rose for the defendant. Now, whenever a new barrister takes the floor for the first time, there is always more or less curiosity and commotion among the old fogies of the forum.

What will he turn out to be? that is the question. All eyes were turned towards him.

They saw a tall, broad-shouldered, full-chested young man, who stood, with a certain dignity, looking upon the notes

that he held in his hand; and when he lifted his stately hea to address the court they saw that his face was not onl beautiful in the noble mold of the features, but almost divin from the inspiring soul within.

Among the eyes that gazed upon him were those of th three masters of the law whom he had now to oppose. The stared at him mercilessly—no doubt with the intention o staring him down. But they did not even confuse him; fo the simple reason that he did not look towards them. The might stare themselves stone blind, but they would have n magnetic influence upon that strong, concentrated, earne soul!

Ishmael was not in the least embarrassed in standing u to address the court for the first time, simply because h was not thinking of himself or his audience, but of h client, and her case as he wished to set it forth; and h was not looking at the spectators, but alternately at th court and at the notes in his hand.

He did not make a long opening, for he wished to reserv himself for the closing speech in final reply to the other He just made a plain statement of his client's case.

He told the court how, at the age of fifteen, she had bee decoyed from her mother's house and married by the plaintif a man more than twice her age; how when she had come int her property he had squandered it all by a method that h the plaintiff, called speculation, but that others called gam bling; how he had lived the life of a scoundrel with r regard for the interests of his wife or children. His who sordid career was outlined in detail and her struggle t live and keep her children was made vivid before their eye They would prove by competent witnesses every point i this statement of the defendant's case; and then he woul demand for his client, not only that she should be secure in the undisturbed possession of her children, her property and her earnings, but that the plaintiff should be require to contribute an annual sum of money to the support of th defendant and her children, and to give security for i payment.

"That's 'carrying the war into Africa' with a vengeance, whispered Walsh to his counsel, as Ishmael concluded hi address.

He then called the witnesses for the defendant. The were numerous and of the highest respectability. Amon them was the pastor of her parish, her family physician and many of the patrons of her school.

They testified to the facts stated by her attorney.

The three attorneys did their duty in the cross-examining line of business. Wiseman cross-examined in a stern manner; Berners in an insinuating way; and Vivian in a sarcastic style; but the only effect of their forensic skill was to bring out the truth from the witnesses—more clearly, strongly, and impressively.

When the last witness for the defendant had been permitted to leave the stand Wiseman arose to address the court on behalf of the plaintiff. He spoke in his own peculiar sledge-hammer style, sonorously striking the anvil and ringing all the changes upon law, custom, precedent, and so forth that always gave the children into the custody of the father. And he ended by demanding that the children be at once delivered over to his client.

He was followed by Berners, who had charge of the eloquence "business" of that stage, and dealt in pathos, tears, white pocket handkerchiefs, and poetical quotations. He drew a most heart-rending picture of the broken-spirited husband and father, rejected by an unforgiving wife and ill-conditioned children, becoming a friendless and houseless wanderer over the wide world; in danger of being driven, by despair, to madness and suicide! He compared the plaintiff to Byron, whose poetry he liberally quoted. And he concluded by imploring the court, with tears in his eyes, to intervene and save his unhappy client from the gulf of perdition to which his implacable wife would drive him. And he sank down in his seat utterly overwhelmed by his feelings and holding a drift of white cambric to his face.

"Am I such an out-and-out monster, Mr. Worth?" whispered Mrs. Walsh, in dismay.

"Everybody knows Berners—his 'madness' and 'suicide,' his 'gulf of perdition' and his white cambric pocket-handkerchief are recognized institutions. See! the judge is actually smiling over it."

Mr. Vivian arose to follow—he did up the genteel comedy; he kept on hand a supply of "little jokes" gleaned from Joe Miller, current comic literature, dinner tables, clubs, etc.—"little jokes" of which every point in his discourse continually reminded him, though his hearers could not always perceive the association of ideas. This gentleman was very facetious over family jars, which reminded him of a "little joke," which he told; he was also very witty upon the subject of matrimonial disputes in particular, which reminded him of another "little joke," which he also told;

but most of all, he was amused at the caprice of womankind, who very often rather liked to be compelled to do as they pleased, which reminded him of a third "little joke." And if the court should allow the defendant the exclusive possession of her children and a separate maintenance, it was highly probable that she would not thank them for their trouble, but would take the first opportunity of voluntarily reconciling herself to her husband and giving him back herself, her home, and her children, which would be equal to any "little joke" he had ever heard in his life, etc., etc., etc.

The audience were all in a broad grin. Even Mrs. Walsh, with her lips of "life-long sadness," smiled.

"You may smile at him," said Ishmael, "and so will I, since I do not at all doubt the issue of this trial; but for all that, joker as he is, he is the most serious opponent that we have. I would rather encounter half a dozen each of Wisemans and Berners than one Vivian. Take human nature in general, it can be more easily laughed than reasoned or persuaded in or out of any measure. People would rather laugh than weep or reflect. Wiseman tries to make them reflect, which they won't do; Berners tries to make them weep, which they can't do; but Vivian with his jokes makes them laugh, which they like to do. And so, he has joked himself into a very large practice at the Washington bar."

But the facetious barrister was bringing his speech to a close, with a brilliant little joke that eclipsed all the preceding ones and set the audience in a roar. And when the laughter had subsided, he finally ended by expressing a hope that the court would not so seriously disappoint and so cruelly wrong the defendant as by giving a decision in her favor.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE YOUNG CHAMPION

ISHMAEL waited for a few minutes for the excitement produced by the last address to subside—the last address that in its qualities and effects had resembled champagne—sparkling but transient, effervescent but evanescent. And when order had been restored Ishmael arose amid a profound silence to make his maiden speech, for the few opening remarks

e had made in initiating the defense could scarcely be called speech. Once more then all the eyes were fixed upon him n expectancy. And, as before, he was undisturbed by these egards because he was unconscious of them; and he was calm ecause he was not thinking of himself or of the figure he was making, but of his client and her cause. He did not are to impress the crowd, he only wished to affect the court. So little did he think of the spectators in the room, that he id not observe that Judge Merlin, Claudia, and Beatrice were among them, seated in a distant corner—Judge Merlin nd Claudia were watching him with curiosity, and Bee with he most affectionate anxiety. His attention was confined o the judges, the counsel, his client, and the memoranda in is hand. He had a strong confidence in the justice of his ause; perfect faith in the providence of God; and sanguine opes of success.

True, he had arrayed against him an almost overpowering orce: the husband of his client, and the three great guns of ne bar—Wiseman, Berners, and Vivian, with law, custom, nd precedent. But with him stood the angels of Justice and Iercy, invisible, but mighty; and, over all, the Omnipotent God, unseen, but all-seeing!

Ishmael possessed the minor advantages of youth, manly eauty, a commanding presence, a gracious smile, and a sweet, eep, sonorous voice. He was besides a new orator among nem, with a fresh original style.

He was no paid attorney; it was not his pocket that was nterested, but his sympathies; his whole heart and soul were n the cause that he had embraced, and he brought to bear pon it all the genius of his powerful mind.

I would like to give you the whole of this great speech that oke up the Washington court from its state of semi-somno- ncy and roused it to the sense of the unjust and cruel things sometimes did when talking in its sleep. But I have only me and space to glance at some of its points; and if anyone ishes to see more of it, it may be found in the published orks of the great jurist and orator.

He began to speak with modest confidence and in clear, oncise, and earnest terms. He said that the court had heard om the learned counsel that had preceded him a great deal f law, sentiment, and wit. From him they should now hear f justice, mercy, and truth!

He reverted to the story of the woman's wrongs, sufferings, nd struggles, continued through many years; he spoke f her love, patience, and forbearance under the severest

trials; he dwelt upon the prolonged absence of her husband prolonged through so many years, and the false position o the forsaken wife, a position so much worse than widowhood inasmuch as it exposed her not only to all the evils of poverty but to suspicion, calumny, and insult. But he bade them not how the woman had passed through the fire unharmed; hov she had fought the battle of life bravely and come out vic toriously; how she had labored on in honorable industry fo years, until she had secured a home for herself and little girl He spoke noble words in behalf not only of his client, but o woman—woman, loving, feeble, and oppressed from th beginning of time—woman, hardly dealt with by nature in th first place, and by the laws, made by her natural lover an protector, man, in the second place. Perhaps it was becaus he knew himself to be the son of a woman only, even a his Master had been before him, that he poured so much c awakening, convicting, and condemning fire, force, and weigl into this part of his discourse. He uttered thoughts an feelings upon this subject, original and startling at that tim but which have since been quoted, both in the Old and Ne World, and have had power to modify those cruel laws whic at that period made woman, despite her understanding inte lect, an idiot, and despite her loving heart a chattel—i the law.

Then he reviewed in turn the speeches of the counsel fc the plaintiff—first that of Wiseman, the ponderous law-ex pounder, which he answered with quite as much law and great deal more equity; secondly, that of Berners, the tea pumper, the false sentiment of which he exposed and crit cized; and thirdly that of Vivian, the laugh-provoker, wit which he dealt the most severely of all, saying that one wh could turn into jest the most sacred affections and mos serious troubles of domestic life, the heart's tragedy, th household wreck before them, could be capable of tellin funny stories at his father's funeral, uttering good joke over his mother's coffin.

He spoke for two hours, warming, glowing, rising with hi subject, until his very form seemed to dilate in grandeu and his face grew radiant as the face of an archangel; an those who heard seemed to think that his lips like those of th prophet of old had been touched with fire from heaver Under the inspiration of the hour, he spoke truths new an startling then, but which have since resounded through th senate chambers of the world, changing the laws of th nations in regard to woman.

Nora, do you see your son? Oh, was it not well worth hile to have loved, suffered, and died, only to have given him the world!

It was a complete success. All his long, patient, painful ears of struggle were rewarded now. It was one splendid ap from obscurity to fame.

The giants of the law attempted to answer him, but it was no use. After the freshness, the fire, the force, the heart, oul, and life in Ishmael's utterances, their old, familiar, ell-worn styles, in which the same arguments, pathos, wit at had done duty in so many other cases was paraded again, ily bored their hearers. In vain Wiseman appealed to eason; Berners to feeling; and Vivian to humor; they ould not do: the court had often heard all that before, and rown heartily tired of it. Wiseman's wisdom was found be foolishness; Berners's pathos laughable; and Vivian's umor grievous.

The triumvirate of the Washington bar were dethroned, and rince Ishmael reigned in their stead.

A few hours later the decision of the court was made nown. It had granted all that the young advocate had asked or his client—the exclusive possession of her children, er property, and her earnings, and also alimony from her usband.

As Ishmael passed out of the court amid the tearful thanks f the mother and her children, and the proud congratulations f honest Reuben and Hannah, he neared the group comosed of Judge Merlin, Claudia, and Beatrice.

Judge Merlin looked smiling and congratulatory; he shook ands with the young barrister, saying:

"Well, Ishmael, you have rather waked up the world to-day, aven't you?"

Bee looked perfectly radiant with joy. Her fingers closed pasmodically on the hand that Ishmael offered her, and she xclaimed, a little incoherently:

"Oh, Ishmael, I always knew you could! I am so happy!"

"Thank you, dearest Bee! Under Divine Providence I we a great deal of my success to-day to your sympathy."

Claudia did not speak; she was deadly pale and cold; her ace was like marble and her hand like ice, as she gave it to shmael. She had always appreciated and loved him against er will; but now, in this hour of his triumph, when he had scovered to the world his real power and worth, her love ose to an anguish of longing that she knew her pride must orever deny; and so when Ishmael took her hand and looked

in her face for the words of sympathy that his heart was hungering to receive from her of all the world, she could not speak.

Ishmael passed out with his friends. When he had gone a stranger who had been watching him with the deepest interest during the whole course of the trial, now came forward, and, with an agitation impossible to conceal, hastily inquired:

"Judge Merlin, for Heaven's sake! who is that young man?"

"Eh! what! Brudenell, you here! When did you arrive?"

"This morning! But for the love of Heaven who is that young man?"

"Who? why the most talented young barrister of the day—a future chief justice, attorney-general, President of the United States, for aught I know! It looks like it, for whatever may be the aspirations of the boy, his intellect and will are sure to realize them!"

"Yes, but who is he? what is his name? who were his parents? where was he born?" demanded Herman Brudenell excitedly.

"Why, the Lord bless my soul alive, man! He is a self-made barrister; his name is Ishmael Worth; his mother was a poor weaver girl named Nora Worth; his father was an unknown scoundrel; he was born at a little hut near—why, Brudenell, you ought to know all about it—near Brudenell Hall!"

"Heaven and earth!"

"What is the matter?"

"The close room—the crowd—and this oppression of the chest that I have had so many years!" gasped Herman Brudenell.

"Get into my carriage and come home with us. Come—I will take no denials! The hotels are all overcrowded. We can send for your luggage. Come!"

"Thank you; I think I will."

"Claudia! Beatrice! come forward, my dears. Here is Mr. Brudenell."

Courtesies were exchanged, and they all went out and entered the carriage.

"I will introduce you to this young man, who has so much interested you, and all the world, in fact, I suppose. He is living with us; and he will be a lion from to-day, I assure you," said the judge, as soon as they were all seated.

"Thank you! I was interested in—in those two poor sisters. One died—what has become of the other?"

"She married my overseer, Gray; they are doing well. They are in the city on a visit at present, stopping at the Farmer's, opposite Center Market."

"Who educated this young man?"

"Himself."

"Did this unknown father make no provision for him?"

"None—the rascal! The boy was as poor as poverty could make him; but he worked for his own living from the time he was seven years old."

Herman had feared as much, for he doubted the check he had written and left for Hannah had ever been presented and cashed, for in the balancing of his bankbook he never saw it among the others.

Meanwhile Ishmael had parted with his friends and gone home to Washington House. He knew that he had had a glorious success; but he took no vain credit to himself; he was only happy that his service had been a free offering to a good cause; and very thankful that it had been crowned with victory. And when he reached home he went up to his little chamber, knelt down in humble gratitude, and rendered all the glory to God!

CHAPTER XXXII

HERMAN BRUDENELL

When the carriage containing Judge Merlin, Claudia, Beatrice, and Mr. Brudenell reached the Washington House the party separated in the hall; the ladies went each to her own chamber to dress for dinner, and Judge Merlin called a servant to show Mr. Brudenell to a spare room, and then went to his own apartment.

When Herman Brudenell had dismissed his attendant and found himself alone he sat down in deep thought.

Since the death of Nora he had been a wanderer over the face of the earth. The revenues of his estate had been mostly paid over to his mother for the benefit of herself and her daughters, yet had scarcely been sufficient for the pride, vanity, and extravagance of those foolish women, who, living in Paris and introduced into court circles by the American

minister, aped the style of the wealthiest among the French aristocracy, and indulged in the most expensive establishment, equipage, retinue, dress, jewelry, balls, etc., in the hope of securing alliances among the old nobility of France.

They might as well have gambled for thrones. The princes, dukes, marquises, and counts drank their wines, ate their dinners, danced at their balls, kissed their hands, and—laughed at them!

The reason was this: the Misses Brudenell, though well-born, pretty, and accomplished, were not wealthy, and were even suspected of being heavily in debt, because of all this show.

The expenditures of the mother and daughters in this speculation were enormous, so much so that at length Herman Brudenell, reckless as he was, became alarmed at finding himself on the very verge of insolvency!

He had signed so many blank checks, which his mother and sisters had filled up with figures so much higher than he had reckoned upon, that at last his Paris bankers had written to him informing him that his account had been so long and so much overdrawn that they had been obliged to decline cashing his last checks.

While Mr. Brudenell still ruminated over his affairs, the second dinner-bell rang, and almost at the same moment Judge Merlin rapped and entered the chamber, with old-fashioned hospitality, to show his guest the way to the drawing-room.

"You feel better, I hope, Brudenell?" he inquired.

"Yes, thank you, judge."

"Come then. We will go down. We are a little behind time at best this evening, upon account of our young friend's long-winded address. It was a splendid affair, though. Worth waiting to hear, was it not?" proudly inquired the judge as they descended the stairs.

They entered the drawing-room.

It was a family party that was assembled there, with the sole exception of the Viscount Vincent, who indeed had become a daily visitor, a recognized suitor of Miss Merlin, and almost one of their set.

As soon as Mr. Brudenell had paid his respects to each member of the family, Lord Vincent advanced frankly and cordially to greet him as an old acquaintance, saying:

"I had just learned from Miss Merlin of your arrival. You must have left London very soon after I did."

Before Mr. Brudenell could reply, Judge Merlin came up th Ishmael and said:

"Lord Vincent, excuse me. Mr. Brudenell, permit me— r. Worth, of the Washington bar."

Herman Brudenell turned and confronted Ishmael Worth. id father and son stood face to face.

Herman's face was quivering with irrepressible yet un- eakable emotion; Ishmael's countenance was serene and iling.

No faintest instinct warned Nora's son that he stood in the esence of his father. He saw before him a tall, thin, ir-complexioned, gentlemanly person, whose light hair was ghtly silvered, and whose dark brown eyes, in such strange ntrast to the blond hair, were bent with interest upon m.

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, young gentleman. rmit me to offer you my congratulations upon your very cided success," said Mr. Brudenell, giving his hand.

Ishmael bowed.

"Brudenell, will you take my daughter in to dinner?" said dge Merlin, seeing that Lord Vincent had already given s arm to Mrs. Middleton.

Herman, glad to be relieved from a position that was ginning to overcome his self-possession, bowed to Miss erlin, who smilingly accepted his escort.

Judge Merlin drew Bee's arm within his own and followed. id Mr. Middleton, with a comic smile, crooked his elbow Ishmael, who laughed instead of accepting it, and those o walking side by side brought up the rear.

That dinner passed very much as other dinners of the me class. Judge Merlin was cordial, Mr. Middleton face- us, Lord Vincent gracious, Mr. Brudenell silent and ap- rently abstracted, and Ishmael was attentive—a listener ther than a speaker. Ladies as usual at dinner-parties, ere the conversation turns upon politics, were rather in e background, and took an early opportunity of with- awing from the table, leaving the gentlemen to finish their litical discussion over their wine.

The latter, however, did not linger long; but soon followed e ladies to the drawing-room, where coffee was served. id soon after the party separated for the evening. Her- n Brudenell withdrew to his chamber with one idea oc- pying him—his son. Since the death of Nora had paralyzed s affections, Herman Brudenell had loved no creature on rth until he met her son upon this evening. Now the

frozen love of years melted and flowed into one strong, im petuous stream towards him—her son—his son! Oh, that h might dare to claim him!

It was late when Mr. Brudenell fell asleep—so late that l overslept himself in the morning. And when at last h awoke he was surprised to find that it was ten o'clock.

But Judge Merlin's house was "liberty hall." His gues breakfasted when they got up, and got up when they awok It was one of his crotchets never to have anyone awakene

When breakfast was over Mr. Brudenell took his hat an walked down the Avenue to Seventh Street, and to th Farmer's in search of Hannah.

In answer to his inquiries he was told that she was i and he was desired to walk up to her room. A servant pr ceding him, opened a door, and said:

"Here is a ge'man to see you, mum."

And Mr. Brudenell entered.

Hannah looked, dropped the needlework she held in h hand, started up, overturning the chair, and with a sta of consternation exclaimed:

"The Lord deliver us! is it you? And hasn't the de got you yet, Herman Brudenell?"

"It is I, Hannah," he answered, dropping without invit tion into the nearest seat.

"And what on earth have you come for, after all the years?" she asked, continuing to stare at him.

"To see you, Hannah."

"And what in the name of common sense do you want see me for? I don't want to see you; that I tell you plainl for I'd just as lief see Old Nick!"

"Hannah," said Herman Brudenell, with an unusual a sumption of dignity, "I have come to speak to you about Are you quite alone?" he suddenly broke off and inquire cautiously glancing around the room.

"What's that to you? What can you have to say to me th you could not shout from the house-top? Yes, I'm alon if you must know!"

"Then I wish to speak to you about my son."

"Your—what?" demanded Hannah, with a frown as blac as midnight.

"My son," repeated Herman Brudenell, with emphasis.

"Your son? What son? I didn't know you had a son What should I know about your son?"

"Woman, stop this! I speak of my son, Ishmael Worth whom I met for the first time in the courtroom yesterday

nd I ask you how it has fared with him these many years?"
emanded Mr. Brudenell sternly, for he was beginning to
se patience with Hannah.

"Oh—h! So you met Ishmael Worth in the courtroom
esterday, just when he had proved himself to be the most
lented man there, did you? That accounts for it all. I
derstand it now! You could leave him in his helpless,
npoverished, orphaned infancy to perish! You could utterly
eglect him, letting him suffer with cold and hunger and
ckness for years and years and years! And now that, by
e blessing of Almighty God, he has worked himself up
ut of that horrible pit into the open air of the world; and
ow that from being a poor, despised outcast babe he has
sen to be a man of note among men; now, forsooth, you
ant to claim him as your son! Herman Brudenell, I always
ted you, but now I scorn you! Twenty odd years ago
would have killed you, only I didn't want to kill your soul as
ell as your body, nor likewise to be hanged for you! And
ow I would shy this stick of wood at your head only that I
n't want Reuben Gray to have the mortification of seeing
s wife took up for assault! But I hate you, Herman Brude-
ll! And I despise you! There! take yourself out of my
ght!"

Mr. Brudenell stamped impatiently and said:

"Hannah, you speak angrily, and therefore, foolishly. What
od could accrue to me, or to him, by my claiming Ishmael
my son, unless I could prove a marriage with his mother?
would only unearth the old, cruel, unmerited scandal now
rgotten! No, Hannah; to you only, who are the sole
ving depository of the secret, will I solace myself by speak-
g of him as my son! You reproach me with having
ft him to perish. I did not so. I left in your hands a check
r several—I forget how many—thousand dollars to be used
r his benefit. And I always hoped that he was well pro-
ded for until yesterday, when Judge Merlin, little thinking
e interest I had in the story, gave me a sketch of Ishmael's
rly sufferings and struggles. And now I ask you what
came of that check?"

"That check? What check? What in the world do you
ean?"

"The check for several thousand dollars which I gave you
the day of my departure, to be used for Ishmael's benefit."

"Well, Herman Brudenell! I always thought, with all your
ults, you were still a man of truth; but after this—"

And Hannah finished by lifting her hands and eyes in horror.

"Hannah, you do severely try my temper, but in memory of all your kindness to my son—"

"Oh! I wasn't kind to him! I was as bad to him as you and all the rest! I wished him dead, and neglected him!"

"You did!"

"Of course! Could anybody expect me to care more for him than his own father did? Yes, I wished him dead, and neglected him because I thought he had no right to be in the world, and would be better out of it! So did everyone else. But he sucked his little, skinny thumb, and looked alive at us with his big, bright eyes, and lived in defiance of everybody. And only see what he has lived to be! But it is the good Lord's doings and not mine, and not yours, Herman Brudenell, so don't thank me any more for kindness that I never showed to Ishmael, and don't tell any more bragging lies about the checks for thousands of dollars that you never left him!"

Again Herman Brudenell stamped impatiently, frowned, bit his lips, and said:

"You shall not goad me to anger with the two-edged sword of your tongue, Hannah! You are unjust, because you are utterly mistaken in your premises! I did leave that check of which I speak! And I wish to know what became of it that it was not used for the support and education of Ishmael. Listen, now, and I will bring the whole circumstance to your recollection."

And Herman Brudenell related in detail all the little incidents connected with his drawing the check, ending with "Now don't you remember, Hannah?"

Hannah looked surprised, and said:

"Yes, but was that little bit of dirty white paper, tore out of an old book, worth all that money?"

"Yes! after I had drawn a check upon it!"

"I didn't know! I didn't understand! I was sort o' dazed with grief, I suppose."

"But what became of the paper, Hannah?"

"Mrs. Jones lit the candle with it!"

"Oh! Hannah!"

"Was the money all lost? entirely lost because that little bit of paper was burnt?"

"To you and to Ishmael it was, of course, since you never received it; but to me it was not, since it was never drawn from the bank."

"Well, then, Mr. Brudenell, since the money was not lost, do not so much care if the check was burnt! I should ot have used it for myself, or Ishmael, anyhow! Though I m glad to know that you did not neglect him, and leave him o perish in destitution, as I supposed you had! I am very lad you took measures for his benefit, although he never rofited by them, and I never would have let him do so. till, it is pleasant to think that you did your duty; and I m sorry I was so unjust to you, Mr. Brudenell."

"Say no more of that, Hannah. Let us talk of my son. emember that it is only to you that I can talk of him. Tell ie all about his infancy and childhood."

CHAPTER XXXIII

ENVY

Mr. Brudenell found Ishmael in the ante-room of the ourt in close conversation with a client, an elderly, care-worn oman in widow's weeds. He caught a few words of her iscourse, to which Ishmael appeared to be listening with ympathy.

"Yes, sir, Maine; we belong to Bangor. He went to alifornia some years ago and made money. And he was n his way home and got as far as this city, where he was aken ill with the cholera, at his brother's house, where he ied before I could get to him; leaving three hundred thou- and dollars, all in California gold, which his brother re- uses to give up, denying all knowledge of it. It is robbery f the widow and orphan, sir, and nothing short of that!"— ie was saying.

"If this is as you state it, it would seem to be a case for detective policeman and a criminal prosecution, rather than or an attorney and a civil suit," said Ishmael.

"So it ought to be, sir, for he deserves punishment; but have been advised to sue him, and I mean to do it, if you ill take my case. But if you do take it, sir, it must be on onditions."

"Yes. What are they?"

"Why, if you do not recover the money, you will not receive

any pay; but if you do recover the money, you will receive a very large share of it yourself, as a compensation for your services and your risk."

"I cannot take your case on these terms, madam; I cannot accept a conditional fee," said Ishmael gently.

"Then what shall I do?" exclaimed the widow, bursting into tears. "I have no money, and shall not have any until I get that! And how can I get that unless I sue for it? Oh, how sue for it, unless you are willing to take the risk? Do, sir, try it! It will be no risk, after all; you will be sure to gain it!"

"It is not the risk that I object to, madam," said Ishmael very gently, "but it is this—to make my fee out of my case would appear to me a sort of professional gambling, from which I should shrink."

"Then, Heaven help me, what shall I do?" exclaimed the widow, weeping afresh.

"Do not distress yourself. I will call and see you this afternoon. And if your case is what you represent it to be I will undertake to conduct it," said Ishmael. And in that moment he made up his mind that if he should find the widow's cause a just one, he would once more make a free offering of his services.

The new client thanked him, gave her address, and departed.

Ishmael turned to go into the courtroom, and found himself confronted with Mr. Brudenell.

"Good-morning, Mr. Worth! I see you have another client already."

"A possible one, sir," replied Ishmael, smiling with satisfaction as he shook hands with Mr. Brudenell.

"A poor one, you mean! Poor widows with claims always make a prey of young lawyers, who are supposed to be willing to plead for nothing, rather than not plead at all! And it is all very well, as it gives the latter an opening. But you are not one of those briefless lawyers; you have already made your mark in the world, and so you must not permit these female forlornities that haunt the courts to consume all your time and attention."

"Sir," said Ishmael gravely and fervently, "I owe so much to God—so much more than I can ever hope to pay, that at least I must show my gratitude to him by working for his poor! Do you not think that is only right, sir?"

And Ishmael looked into the face of this stranger, whom

e had seen but once before, with a singular longing for his pproval.

"Yes! I do! my—I do, Mr. Worth!" replied Brudenell with motion, as they entered the courtroom together.

Late that afternoon Ishmael kept his appointment with the idow Cobham, and their consultation ended in Ishmael's cceptance of her brief. Other clients also came to him, nd soon his hands were full of business.

As the Supreme Court had risen, and Judge Merlin had ttle or no official business on hand, Ishmael's position in is office was almost a sinecure, and therefore the young an delicately hinted to his employer the propriety of a eparation between them.

"No, Ishmael! I cannot make up my mind to part with you et. It is true, as you say, that there is little to do now; ut recollect that for months past there has been a great deal o do, and you have done four times as much work for me as was entitled to expect of you. So that now you have arned the right to stay on with me to the end of the year, vithout doing any work at all."

"But, sir—"

"But I won't hear a word about your leaving us just yet, shmael. I will hold you to your engagement, at least until he first of June, when we all return to Tanglewood; then, f you wish it, of course I will release you, as your professional duties will require your presence in the city. But while we remain in town, I will not consent to your leaving s, nor release you from your engagement," said the judge.

And Ishmael was made happy by this decision. It had been point of honor with him, as there was so little to do, to ffer to leave the judge's employment; but now that the offer ad been refused, and he was held to his engagement, he was ery much pleased to find himself obliged to remain under he same roof with Claudia.

Ah! sweet and fatal intoxication of her presence! he would ot willingly tear himself away from it.

Meanwhile this pleasure was but occasional and fleeting. He seldom saw Claudia except at the dinner hour.

Miss Merlin never now got up to breakfast with the family. Her life of fashionable dissipation was beginning to tell even n her youthful and vigorous constitution. Every evening he was out until a late hour, at some public ball, private arty, concert, theater, lecture room, or some other place of musement. The consequence was that she was always too red to rise and breakfast with the family, whom she seldom

joined until the two o'clock lunch. And at that hour Ishmae was sure to be at court, where the case of Cobham versu Hanley, in which Mr. Worth was counsel for the plaintiff was going on. At the six o'clock dinner he daily met her as I said, but that was always in public. And immediatel after coffee she would go out, attended by Mrs. Middleto as chaperon and the Viscount Vincent as escort. And sh would return long after Ishmael had returned to his roon so that he would not see her again until the next day a dinner. And so the days wore on.

Mr. Brudenell remained the guest of Judge Merlin. A strange affection was growing up between him and Ishmae Worth. Brudenell understood the secret of this affection Ishmael did not. The father, otherwise childless, naturall loved the one gifted son of his youth, and loved him the mor that he durst not acknowledge him. And Ishmael, in hi genial nature, loved in return the stranger who showed s much affectionate interest in him. No one perceived th likeness that was said by the viscount to exist between th two except the viscount himself; and since he had seen then together he had ceased to comment upon the subject.

Reuben Gray and his family had returned home, so tha Mr. Brudenell got no farther opportunity of talking witl Hannah.

The Washington season, prolonged by an extra session o Congress, was at length drawing to a close; and it was finished off with a succession of very brilliant parties. Ishmael Worth was now included in every invitation sent to the family of Judge Merlin, and in compliance with the urgen advice of the judge he accepted many of these invitations and appeared in some of the most exclusive drawing rooms in Washington, where his handsome person, polished manners and distinguished talents made him welcome.

But none among these brilliant parties equaled in splendo the ball given early in the season by the Merlins.

"And since no one has been able to eclipse my ball, I will eclipse it myself by a still more splendid one—a final grand display at the end of the season, like a final grand tableau at the close of the pantomime," said Claudia.

"My dear, you will ruin yourself," expostulated Mrs. Middleton.

"My aunt, I shall be a viscountess," replied Miss Merlin.

And preparations for the great party were immediately commenced. More than two hundred invitations were sent out. And the aid of the three great ministers of fashion

was called in, and each was furnished with a carte-blanche as to expense. And as to squander the money of the prodigal heiress was to illustrate their own arts, they availed themselves of the privilege in the freest manner.

For a few days the house was closed to visitors, and given up to suffer the will of the decorator.

When the festive occasion arrived, it was Miss Merlin's whim to dress with exceeding richness. She wore a robe of dazzling splendor—a fabric of the looms of India, a sort of gauze of gold, that seemed to be composed of woven sunbeams, and floated gracefully around her elegant figure and accorded well with her dark beauty. The bodice of this gorgeous dress was literally starred with diamonds. A coronet of diamonds flashed above her black ringlets, a necklace of diamonds rested upon her full bosom, and bracelets of the same encircled her rounded arms. Such a glowing, splendid, refulgent figure as she presented suggested the idea of a Mohammedan sultana rather than that of a Christian maiden. But it was Miss Merlin's caprice upon this occasion to dazzle, bewilder, and astonish.

Bee, who stood near her like a maid of honor to a queen, was dressed with her usual simplicity and taste, in a fine white crêpe, with a single white lily on her bosom.

Mrs. Middleton, also standing with Claudia, wore a robe of silver gray.

And this pure white on one side and pale gray on the other did but heighten the effect of Claudia's magnificent costume.

The fashionable hour for assembling at evening parties was then ten o'clock. By a quarter past ten the company began to arrive, and by eleven the rooms were quite full.

The Viscount Vincent arrived early, and devoted himself to Miss Merlin, standing behind her chair like a lord in waiting.

Ishmael was also present with this group ostensibly in attendance upon Beatrice, but really and truly waiting every turn of Claudia's countenance or conversation.

While they were all standing, grouped in this way, to receive all comers, Judge Merlin approached, smiling, and accompanied by an officer in the uniform of the United States army, whom he presented in these words:

"Claudia, my love, I bring you an old acquaintance—a very old acquaintance—Captain Burghe."

Claudia bowed as haughtily and distantly as it was possible to do; and then, without speaking, glanced inquiringly at her father as if to ask—"How came this person here?"

Judge Merlin replied to that mute question by saying:

"I was so lucky as to meet our young friend on the Avenue to-day; he is but just arrived. I told him what was going on here this evening and begged him to waive ceremony and come to us. And he was so good as to take me at my word! Bee, my dear, don't you remember your old playmate, Alfred Burghe?" said the judge, appealing for relief to his amiable niece.

Now, Bee was too kind-hearted to hurt anyone's feelings, and yet too truthful to make professions she did not feel. She could not possibly say she was glad to see Alfred Burghe; but she could give him her hand and say:

"I hope you are well, Mr. Burghe."

"Captain! Captain, my dear! he commands a company now! Lord Vincent permit me—Captain Burghe."

A haughty bow from the viscount and a reverential one from the captain acknowledged this presentation.

Then Mrs. Middleton kindly shook hands with the unwelcome visitor.

And finally Claudia unbent a little from her hauteur and condescended to address a few commonplace remarks to him. But at length her eyes flashed upon Ishmael standing behind Bee.

"You are acquainted with Mr. Worth, I presume, Captain Burghe?" she inquired.

"I have not that honor," said Alfred Burghe arrogantly.

"Then I will confer it upon you!" said Claudia very gravely. "Mr. Worth, I hope you will permit me to present to you Captain Burghe. Captain Burghe, Mr. Worth, of the Washington bar."

Ishmael bowed with courtesy; but Alfred Burghe grew violently red in the face, and with a short nod turned away.

"Captain Burghe has a bad memory, my lord!" said Claudia, turning to the viscount. "The gentleman to whom I have just presented him once saved his life at the imminent risk of his own. It is true the affair happened long ago, when they were both boys; but it seems to me that if anyone had exposed himself to a death by fire to rescue me from a burning building, I should remember it to the latest day of my life."

"Pardon me, Miss Merlin. The circumstance to which you allude was beyond my control, and Mr.—a—Word's share in it without my consent; his service was, I believe, well repaid by my father; and the trouble with me is not

hat my memory is defective, but rather that it is too re-entive. I remember the origin of—"

"Our acquaintance with Mr. Worth!" interrupted Claudia, urning deadly pale and speaking in the low tones of sup-pressed passion. "Yes, I know! there was a stopped car-iage, rifled hampers, and detected thieves. There was a oung gentleman who dishonored his rank, and a noble vorking boy who distinguished himself in that affair. I emember perfectly well the circumstances to which you efer."

"You mistake, Miss Merlin," retorted Burghe, with a hot lush upon his brow, "I do not refer to that boyish frolic, or it was no more! I refer to—"

"Mr. Burghe, excuse me. Mr. Worth, will you do me the avor to tell the band to strike up a quadrille? Lord Vin-ent, I presume they expect us to open the ball. Bee, my lear, you are engaged to Mr. Worth for this set. Be sure vhen he returns to come to the same set with us and be our vis-à-vis," said Claudia, speaking rapidly.

Before she had finished Ishmael had gone upon her errand, nd the band struck up a lively quadrille. Claudia gave ner hand to Lord Vincent, who led her to the head of the irst set. When Ishmael returned, Bee gave him her hand nd told him Claudia's wish, which, of course, had all the orce of a command for him, and he immediately led Bee o the place opposite Lord Vincent and Miss Merlin.

And Captain Burghe was left to bite his nails in foiled nalignity.

But later in the evening he took his revenge and received is punishment.

It happened in this manner: New quadrilles were being ormed. Claudia was again dancing with Lord Vincent, and hey had taken their places at the head of one of the sets. shmael was dancing with one of the poor neglected "wall-lowers" to whom Bee had kindly introduced him, and he led is partner to a vacant place at the foot of one of the sets; he vas so much engaged in trying to entertain the shy and awk-vard girl that he did not observe who was their vis-à-vis, or overhear the remarks that were made.

But Claudia, who, with the viscount, was standing very ear, heard and saw all. She saw Ishmael lead his shy young artner up to a place in the set, exactly opposite to where Al-red Burghe with his partner, Miss Tourneysee, stood. And he heard Mr. Burghe whisper to Miss Tourneysee:

"Excuse me; and permit me to lead you to a seat. The

person who has just taken the place opposite to us is not a proper associate even for me, still less for you."

And she saw Miss Tourneysee's look of surprise and heard her low-toned exclamation:

"Why, it is Mr. Worth! I have danced with him often!"

"I am sorry to hear it. I hope you will take the word of an officer and a gentleman that he is not a respectable person, and by no means a proper acquaintance for any lady."

"But why not?"

"Pardon me. I cannot tell you why not. It is not a story fit for your ears. But I will tell your father. For I think the real position of the fellow ought to be known. In the meantime, will you take my word for the truth of what I have said, and permit me to lead you to a seat?"

"Certainly," said the young lady, trembling with distress.

"I regret exceedingly to deprive you of your dance; but you perceive that there is no other vacant place."

"Oh, don't mention it! Find me a seat."

This low-toned conversation, every word of which had been overheard by Claudia who, though in another set, stood nearly back to back with the speaker, was entirely lost to Ishmael, who stood at the foot of the same set with him, but was at a greater distance, and was besides quite absorbed in the task of reassuring his timid schoolgirl companion.

Just as Burghe turned to lead his partner away, and Ishmael, attracted by the movement, lifted his eyes to see the cause, Claudia gently drew Lord Vincent after her, and going up to the retiring couple said:

"Miss Tourneysee, I beg your pardon; but will you and your partner do myself and Lord Vincent the favor to exchange places with us? We particularly desire to form a part of this set."

"Oh, certainly!" said the young lady, wondering, but rejoiced to find that she should not be obliged to miss the dance.

They exchanged places accordingly; but as they still stood very near together, Claudia heard him whisper to his partner:

"This evening I think I will speak to your father and some other gentlemen and enlighten them as to who this fellow really is!"

Claudia heard all this; but commanded herself. Her face was pale as marble; her lips were bloodless; but her dark eyes had the terrible gleam of suppressed but determined hatred! In such moods as hers, people have sometimes planned murder.

However, she went through all the four dances very com-

posedly. And when they were over and Lord Vincent had led her to a seat, she sent him to fetch her a glass of water, while she kept her eye on the movements of Captain Burghe, until she saw him deposit his partner on a sofa and leave her to fetch a cream, or some such refreshment.

And then Claudia arose, drank the ice-water brought her by the viscount, set the empty glass on a stand and requested Lord Vincent to give her his arm down the room, as she wished to speak to Captain Burghe.

The viscount glanced at her in surprise, saw that her face was bloodless; but ascribed her pallor to fatigue.

Leaning on Lord Vincent's arm, she went down the whole length of the room until she paused before the sofa on which sat Miss Tournyesee and several other ladies, attended by General Tourneysee, Captain Burghe and other gentlemen.

Burghe stood in front of the sofa, facing the ladies and with his back towards Claudia, of whose approach he was entirely ignorant, as he discoursed as follows:

"Quite unfit to be received in respectable society, I assure you, General! Came of a wretchedly degraded set, the lowest of the low, upon my honor. This fellow—"

Claudia touched his shoulder with the end of her fan.

Alfred Burge turned sharply around and confronted Miss Merlin, and on meeting her eyes grew as pale as she was herself.

"Captain Burghe," she said, modulating her voice to low and courteous tones, "you have had the misfortune to malign one of our most esteemed friends, at present a member of our household. I regret this accident exceedingly, as it puts me under the painful necessity of requesting you to leave the house with as little delay as possible!"

"Miss Merlin—ma'am!" began the captain, crimsoning with shame and rage.

"You have heard my request, sir! I have no more to say but to wish you a very good evening," said Claudia, as with a low and sweeping curtsy she turned away.

Passing near the hall where the footman waited, she spoke to one of them, saying:

"Powers, attend that gentleman to the front door."

All this was done so quietly that Alfred Burghe was able to slink from the room, unobserved by anyone except the little group around the sofa, whom he had been entertaining with his calumnies. To them he had muttered that he would have satisfaction; that he would call Miss Merlin's father to a severe account for the impertinence of his daughter, etc.

But the consternation produced by these threats was soon dissipated. The band struck up an alluring waltz, and Lord Vincent claimed the hand of Beatrice, and Ishmael, smiling, radiant and unsuspicious, came in search of Miss Tourneysee, who accepted his hand for the dance without an instant's hesitation.

"Do you know"—inquired Miss Tourneysee, with a little curiosity to ascertain whether there was any mutual enmity between Burghe and Ishmael—"do you know who that Captain Burghe is that danced the last quadrille with me?"

"Yes; he is the son of the late Commodore Burghe, who was a gallant officer, a veteran of 1812, and did good service during the last War of Independence," said Ishmael generously, uttering not one word against his implacable foe.

Miss Tourneysee looked at him wistfully and inquired: "Is the son as good a man as the father?"

"I have not known Captain Burghe since we were at school together."

"I do not like him. I do not think he is a gentleman," said Miss Tourneysee.

Ishmael did not reply. It was not his way to speak even deserved evil of the absent.

But Miss Tourneysee drew a mental comparison between the meanness of Alfred's conduct and the nobility of Ishmael's. And the dance succeeded the conversation.

Claudia remained sitting on the sofa beside Mrs. Middleton, until at the close of the dance, when she was rejoined by the viscount, who did not leave her again during the evening.

The early summer nights were short, and so it was near the dawn when the company separated.

The party as a whole had been the most splendid success of the season.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE BRIDE-ELECT

Events are sometimes without a master, and so, the son of Powhatan was destined to find that circumstances are often stronger than those forces that he defied.

His departure from Washington was delayed for weeks by an unexpected event.

One morning the Viscount Vincent called as usual, and, after a prolonged private interview with Miss Merlin, he sent a message to Judge Merlin requesting to see him alone for a few minutes.

Ishmael was seated with Judge Merlin in the study at the moment Powers brought this message.

"Ah! 'Lord Vincent requests the honor of a private interview' with me, does he? Well, it is what I have been expecting for some days! Wonder if he doesn't think he is conferring an honor instead of receiving one? Ask him to be so good as to walk up, Powers. Ishmael, my dear boy, excuse me for dismissing you for a few minutes; but pray return to me as soon as this Lord—'Foppington'—leaves me. May Satan fly away with him, for I know he is coming to ask me for my girl!"

It was well that Ishmael happened to be sitting with his back to the window. It was well also that Judge Merlin did not look up as his young partner passed out, else would the judge have seen the haggard countenance which would have told him more eloquently than words could of the force of the blow that had fallen on Ishmael's heart.

He went up into his own little room, and sat down at his desk, and leaning his brow upon his hand struggled with the anguish that wrung his heart.

It had fallen, then! It had fallen—the crushing blow! Claudia was betrothed to the viscount. He might have been, as everyone else was, prepared for this. But he was not. For he knew that Claudia was perfectly conscious of his own passionate love for her, and he knew that she loved him with almost equal fervor. It is true his heart had been often wrung with jealousy when seeing her with Lord Vincent; yet even then he had thought that her vanity only was interested in receiving the attentions of the viscount; and he had trusted in her honor that he believed would never permit her, while loving himself, to marry another, or even give that other serious encouragement. It is true also that he had never breathed his love to Claudia, for he knew that to do so would be an unpardonable abuse of his position in Judge Merlin's family, a flagrant breach of confidence, and a fatal piece of presumption that would insure his final banishment from Claudia's society. So he had struggled to control his passion, seeing also that Claudia strove to conquer hers. And though no words passed between them, each knew by secret sympathy the state of the other's mind.

But lately, since his brilliant success at the bar and the

glorious prospect that opened before him, he had begun to hope that Claudia, conscious of their mutual love, would wait for him only a few short years, at the end of which he would be able to offer her a position not unworthy even of Judge Merlin's daughter.

Such had been his splendid "castle in the air." But now the thunderbolt had fallen and his castle was in ruins.

Claudia, whom he had believed to be, if not perfectly faultless, yet the purest, noblest, and proudest among women; Claudia, his queen, had been capable of selling herself to be the wife of an unloved man, for the price of a title and a coronet—a breath and a bauble!

Claudia had struck a fatal blow, not only to his love for her, but to his honor of her; and both love and honor were in their death-throes!

Anguish is no computer of time. He might have sat there half an hour or half a day, he could not have told which, when he heard the voice of his kind friend calling him.

"Ishmael, Ishmael, my lad, where are you, boy? Come to me!"

"Yes, yes, sir, I am coming," he answered mechanically.

And like one who has fainted from torture, and recovered in bewilderment, he arose and walked down to the study.

Some blind instinct led him straight to the chair that was sitting with its back to the window; into this he sank, with his face in the deep shadow.

Judge Merlin was walking up and down the floor, with signs of disturbance in his looks and manners.

A waiter with decanters of brandy and wine, and some glasses, stood upon the table. This was a very unusual thing.

"Well, Ishmael, it is done! my girl is to be a viscountess; but I do not like it; no, I do not like it!"

Ishmael was incapable of reply; but the judge continued:

"It is not only that I shall lose her; utterly lose her, for her home will be in another hemisphere, and the ocean will roll between me and my sole child,—it is not altogether that,—but, Ishmael, I don't like the fellow; and I never did, and never can!"

Here the judge paused, poured out a glass of wine, drank it, and resumed:

"And I do not know why I don't like him! that is the worst of it! His rank is, of course, unexceptionable, and indeed much higher than a plain republican like myself has a right to expect in a son-in-law! And his character appears to be unquestionable! He is good-looking, well-behaved, intelligent

nd well educated young fellow enough, and so I do not now why it is that I don't like him! But I don't like him, nd that is all about it!"

The judge sighed, ran his hands through his gray hair, nd continued:

"If I had any reason for this dislike; if I could find any ust cause of offense in him; if I could put my hand down n any fault of his character, I could then say to my daughter: object to this man for your husband upon this account,' nd then I know she would not marry him in direct opposi- on to my wishes. But, you see, I cannot do anything like iis, and my objection to the marriage, if I should express it, ould appear to be caprice, prejudice, injustice—"

He sighed again, walked several times up and down the oor in silence, and then once more resumed his monologue:

"People will soon be congratulating me on my daughter's ery splendid marriage. Congratulating me! Good Heaven, hat a mockery! Congratulating me on the loss of my only ild, to a foreigner, whom I half dislike and more than half spect—though without being able to justify either feeling. What do you think, Ishmael? Is that a subject for con- atulation? But, good Heaven, boy! what is the matter with ou? Are you ill?" he suddenly exclaimed, pausing before e young man and noticing for the first time the awful pallor f his face and the deadly collapse of his form.

"Are you ill, my dear boy? Speak!"

"Yes, yes, I am ill!" groaned Ishmael.

"Where? where?"

"Everywhere!"

"You should not overwork yourself, Ishmael!" he declared. It is absurd to kill yourself for a living, you know."

"I think, Judge Merlin, that, as you are so soon about to ave Washington, and as there is so little to do in your office, should be grateful if you would at once release me from ur engagement and permit me to leave your employment," id Ishmael, who felt that it would be to him the most eadful trial to remain in the house and meet Claudia and incent as betrothed lovers every day, and at last witness eir marriage.

The judge looked annoyed and then asked:

"Now, Ishmael, why do you wish to leave me before the piration of the term for which you were engaged?"

And before Ishmael could answer that question, he contin- d:

"You are in error as to the reasons you assign. In the first

place, I am not to leave Washington so soon as I expected; as it is arranged that we shall remain here for the solemnization of the marriage, which will not take place until the first of July. And in the second place, instead of there being but little to do in the office, there will be a great deal to do—all Claudia's estate to be arranged, the viscount's affairs to be examined, marriage settlements to be executed,—I wish it was the bridegroom that was to be executed instead,—letters to be written, and what not. So that you see I shall need your services very much. And besides, Ishmael, my boy, I do not wish to part with you just now, in this great trial of my life; for it is a great trial to me, Ishmael, to part with my only child, to a foreigner whom I dislike and who will take her across the sea to another world. I have loved you as a son, Ishmael. And now I ask you to stand by me in this crisis—for I do not know how I shall bear it. It will be to me like giving her up to death."

Ishmael arose and placed his hand in that of his old friend. His stately young form was shaken by agitation, as an oak tree is by a storm, as he said:

"I will remain with you, Judge Merlin. I will remain with you through this trial. But oh, you do not know—you cannot know how terrible the ordeal will be to me!"

A sudden light of revelation burst upon Judge Merlin's mind! He looked into that agonized young face, clasped that true hand and said:

"Is it so, my boy? Oh, my poor boy, is it indeed so?"

"Make some excuse for me to the family below; say that I am not well, for that indeed is true; I cannot come into the drawing room this evening!" said Ishmael.

And he hastily wrung his friend's hand and hurried from the room, for after that one touch of sympathy from Claudia's father he felt that if he had stayed another moment he should have shamed his manhood and wept.

He hurried up into his little room to strive, in solitude and prayer, with his great sorrow.

Meanwhile the judge took up his hat for a walk in the open air. He had not seen his daughter since he had given his consent to her betrothal. And he felt that as yet he would not see her. He wished to subdue his own feelings of pain and regret before meeting her with the congratulations which he wished to offer.

"After all," he said to himself, as he descended the stairs, "after all, I suppose, I should dislike any man in the world who should come to marry Claudia, so it is not the viscount

who is in fault; but I who am unreasonable. But Ishmael! Ah, poor boy! poor boy! Heaven forgive Claudia if she has had anything to do with this! And may Heaven comfort him, for he deserves to be happy!"

Judge Merlin walked about, reasoning with himself all day; but he could not walk off his depression of spirits, or reason away his misgivings.

He returned home in time to dress for dinner. He crept up to his chamber with a wearied and stealthy air, for he was still dispirited and desirous of avoiding a meeting with his daughter.

He made his toilet and then sat down, resolved not to leave his chamber until the dinner-bell rang, so that he should run no risk of seeing her until he met her at dinner, where of course no allusion would be made to the event of the morning.

He took up the evening paper, that lay upon the dressing-table by some chance, and tried to read. But the words conveyed no meaning to his mind.

"She is all I have in this world!" he sighed as he laid the paper down.

"Papa!"

He looked up.

There she stood within his chamber door! It was an unprecedented intrusion. There she stood in her rich evening dress of purple moire-antique, with the bandeau of diamonds encircling her night-black hair. Two crimson spots like the flush of hectic fever burned in her cheeks, and her eyes were unnaturally bright and wild, almost like those of insanity.

"Papa, may I come to you? Oh, papa, I have been waiting to speak to you all day; and it seems to me as if you had purposely kept out of my way. Are you displeased, papa? May I come to you now?"

He opened his arms, and she came and threw herself upon his bosom, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"What is the matter, my darling?"

"Are you displeased, papa?"

"No, no, my darling! Why should I be? How could I be so unreasonable? But—do you love him, Claudia?"

"He will be an earl, papa."

"Are you happy, Claudia?"

"I shall be a countess, papa!"

"But—are you happy, my dear, I ask you."

"Happy? Who is? Who ever was?"

"Your mother and myself were happy, very happy during the ten blessed years of our union. But then we loved each

other, Claudia. Do you love this man whom you are about to make your husband?"

"Papa, I have consented to be his wife. Should not that satisfy you?"

"Certainly, certainly, my child! Besides, it is not for my rough, masculine hand to probe your heart. Your mother might do it if she were living, but not myself."

"Papa, bless me! it was for that I came to you. Oh, give me your blessing before I go downstairs to—him, whom I must henceforth meet as my promised husband."

"May the Lord bless and save you, my poor, motherless girl!" he said, laying his hand on her bowed head.

And she arose, and without another word went below stairs.

When she entered the drawing room she found the viscount there alone. He hastened to meet her with gallant alacrity and pressed his lips to hers, but at their touch the color fled from her face and did not return. With attentive courtesy Lord Vincent handed her to a seat and remained standing near, seeking to interest and amuse her with his conversation. But just as the tête-à-tête was growing unsupportable to Claudia, the door opened and Beatrice entered. Too many times had Bee come in upon just such a tête-à-tête to suspect that there was anything more in this one than there had been in any other for the last six months. So, unconscious of the recent betrothal of this pair, she, smiling, accepted the chair the viscount placed for her, and readily followed Claudia's lead, by allowing herself to be drawn into conversation. Several times she looked up at Claudia's face, noticing its marble whiteness; but at length concluded that it must be only the effect of late hours, and so dropped the subject from her mind.

Presently the other members of the family dropped in and the dinner was served.

One vacant chair at the table attracted general attention. But, ah! to one there that seat was not vacant; it was filled with the specter of her murdered truth.

"Where is Mr. Worth?" inquired Mrs. Middleton, from the head of the table.

"Oh! worked himself into a nervous headache over Allenby's complicated brief! I told him how it would be if he applied himself so unintermittingly to business; but he would take no warning. Well, these young enthusiasts must learn by painful experience to modify their zeal," said the judge, in explanation.

Everyone expressed regret except Claudia, who understood and felt how much worse than any headache was the heart-sickness that had for the time mastered even Ishmael's great strength; but she durst utter no word of sympathy. And the dinner proceeded to its conclusion. And directly after the coffee was served the viscount departed.

Meanwhile Ishmael lay extended upon his bed, clasping his temples and waging a silent war with his emotions.

A rap disturbed him.

"Come in."

Powers entered with a tea-tray in his hands, upon which was neatly arranged a little silver tea-service, with a transparent white cup, saucer, and plate. The wax candle in its little silver candlestick that sat upon the tray was the only light, and scarcely served to show the room.

Ishmael raised himself up just as Powers set the tray upon the stand beside the bed.

"Who has had leisure to think of me this evening?" thought Ishmael, as he contemplated this unexpected attention. Then, speaking aloud, he inquired:

"Who sent me these, Powers?"

"Miss Middleton, sir; and she bade me to say to you that you must try to eat; and that it is a great mistake to fast when one has a nervous headache, brought on by fatigue and excitement; and that the next best thing to rest is food, and both together are a cure," replied the man, carefully arranging the service on the stand.

"I might have known it," thought Ishmael, with an undefined feeling of self-reproach. "I might have known that she would not forget me, even though I forgot myself. What would my life be at home without this dear little sister? Sweet sister! dear sister! Yes, I will follow her advice; I will eat and drink for her sake, because I know she will question Powers and be disappointed if she finds that I have not done justice to this repast."

"Will you have more light, sir?" asked the footman.

"No, no, thank you," replied Ishmael, rising and seating himself in a chair beside the stand.

The tea was strong and fragrant, the cream rich, the sugar crystalline, and a single cup of the beverage refreshed him. The toast was crisp and yellow, the butter fresh, and the shavings of chipped beef crimson and tender. And so, despite his heartache and headache, Ishmael found his healthy and youthful appetite stimulated by all this. And the meal that was begun for Bee's sake was finished for his own.

"Your head is better now, I hope, sir?" respectfully inquired Powers, as he prepared to remove the service.

"Much, thank you. Tell Miss Middleton so, with my respects, and say how grateful I feel to her for this kind attention."

"Yes, sir."

"And, Powers, you may bring me lights now."

And a few minutes later, when Powers had returned with two lighted candles and placed them on the table, Ishmael, who knew that not an overtasked brain, but an undisciplined heart, was the secret of his malady, set himself to work as to a severe discipline, and worked away for three or four hours with great advantage; for, when at twelve o'clock he retired to bed, he fell asleep and slept soundly until morning.

That is what work did for Ishmael. And work will do as much for anyone who will try it.

It is true in the morning he awoke to a new sense of woe; but the day had also its work to discipline him. He breakfasted with Bee and her father and the judge, who were the only members of the family present at the table; and then he went to the City Hall, where he had an appointment with the District Attorney.

That morning the engagement between Lord Vincent and Claudia was formally announced to the family circle. And Bee understood the secret of Ishmael's sudden illness. The marriage was appointed to take place on the first of the ensuing month, and so the preparations for the event were at once commenced.

CHAPTER XXXV

CLAUDIA'S WOE

Sitting within the recess of the dormer window, soothed by the gathering darkness of the quiet, starlight night, and by the gentle cadences of Bee's low, melodious voice, as she sung her baby sister to sleep, Ishmael remained some little time longer, when suddenly Bee's song ceased, and he heard her exclamation of surprise:

"Claudia, you up here! and already dressed for dinner! How well you look! How rich that maize-colored brocade is! And how elegant that spray of diamonds in your hair! I never saw you wear it before! Is it a new purchase?"

"It is the viscount's present. I wear it this evening in is honor."

"How handsome you are, Lady Vincent! You know I do ot often flatter, but really, Claudia, all the artist in me de- ghts to contemplate you. I never saw you with such brilliant yes, or such a beautiful color."

"Brilliant eyes! beautiful color! Ha! ha! ha! the first renzy, I think! The last—well, it ought to be beautiful. I aid ten dollars a scruple for it at a wicked French shop in roadway! And I have used the scruple unscrupulously!" ne cried, with a bitter laugh as of self-scorn.

"Oh, Claudia—rouged!" said Bee, in a tone of surprise nd pain.

"Yes, rouged and powdered! why not? Why should the ace be true when the life is false! Oh, Bee," she suddenly oke forth in a wail of anguish; "lay that child down and sten to me! I must tell someone, or my heart will break!"

There was a movement, a low, muffling, hushing sound, that old the unwilling listener that Bee was putting her baby sister the bed. Ishmael arose with the intention of leaving his oom, and slipping out of hearing of the conversation that as not intended for his ears; but utterly overcome by the owding emotions of his heart, he sank back in his chair.

He heard Bee return to her place. He heard Claudia throw erself down on the floor by Bee's side, and say:

"Oh, let me lay my head down upon your lap, Bee!"

"Claudia, dear Claudia, what is the matter with you? What an I do for you?"

"Receive my confidence, that is all. Hear my confession. must tell somebody or die. I wish I was a Catholic, and ad a father confessor who would hear me and comfort me, nd absolve my sins, and keep my secrets!"

"Can any man stand in that relation to a woman except er father, if she is single, or her husband, if she is mar- ed?" asked Bee.

"I don't know—and I don't care! Only when I passed by . Patrick's Church, with this load of trouble on my soul, felt as if it would have done me good to steal into one of ose veiled recesses and tell the good old father there!"

"You could have told your heavenly Father anywhere."

"He knows it already; but I durst not pray to him! I am t so impious as that either. I have not presumed to pray r a month—not since my betrothal."

"You have not presumed to pray. Oh, Claudia!"

"How should I dare to pray, after I had deliberately sold

myself to the demon—after I had deliberately determined to sin and take the wages of sin?"

"Claudia! Oh, Heaven! You are certainly mad!"

"I know it; but the knowledge does not help me to the cure. I have been mad a month!" Then breaking forth into a wail of woe, she cried: "Oh, Bee! I do not love that man! I do not love him! and the idea of marrying him appalls my very soul!"

"Good Heaven, Claudia, then why—" began Bee, but Claudia fiercely continued:

"I loathe him! I sicken at him! His first kiss! Oh, Bee! the cold, clammy touch of those lips struck all the color from my face forever, I think! I loathe him!"

"Oh, Claudia, Claudia, why, in the name of all that is wise and good, do you do yourself, and him, too, such a terrible wrong as to marry him?" inquired the deeply-shocked maiden.

"Because I must! Because I will! I have deliberately determined to be a peeress of England, and I will be one, whatever the cost."

"But oh! have you thought of the deadly sin—the treachery, the perjury, the sacrilege; oh! and the dreadful degradation of such a loveless marriage?"

"Have I thought of these things—these horrors? Yes; witness this tortured heart and racked brain of mine!"

"Then why, oh, why, Claudia, do you persevere?"

"I am in the vortex of the whirlpool, and cannot stop myself!"

"Then let me stop you. My weak hand is strong enough for that. Remain here, dear Claudia. Let me go downstairs and report that you are ill, as indeed and in truth you are. The marriage can be delayed, and then you can have an explanation with the viscount, and break it off altogether."

"And break my plighted faith! Is that your advice, young moralist?"

"There was no faith in your plighted word, Claudia. It was very wrong to promise to marry a man you could not love; but it would be criminal to keep such a promise. Speak candidly to his lordship, Claudia, and ask him to release you from your engagement. My word on it he will do it."

"Of course, and make me the town talk for the delight of all who envy me."

"Better be that than an unloving wife."

"No, Bee! I must fulfill my destiny. And, besides, I never thought of turning from it. I am in the power of the whirlpool or the demon."

"It is the demon—the demon that is carrying you down into this whirlpool. And the name of the demon is Ambition, Claudia; and the name of the whirlpool is ruin."

"Yes! it is ambition that possesses my soul. None other but the sins by which angels fell would have power to draw my soul down from heaven—for heaven was possible to me, once!" And with these last words she melted into tears and wept as if the fountains of her heart were broken up and gushing through her eyes.

"Yes," she repeated in the pauses of her weeping. "Heaven was possible for me once! Never more, oh, never, never more! Filled with the ambition of Lucifer I have cast myself out of that heaven. But alas! alas! I have Lucifer's ambition without his strength to suffer."

"Claudia, dear Claudia!"

"Do not speak to me. Let me speak, for I must speak, or die! It is not only that I do not love this viscount, but, oh, Bee!" she wailed in the prolonged tones of unutterable woe, "I love another! I love Ishmael!"

There was a sudden movement and a fall.

"You push me from you! Oh, cruel friend! Let me lay my head upon your lap again, Bee, and sob out all this anguish here. I must, or my heart will burst. I love Ishmael! His love is the heaven of heavens from which Ambition has cast me down. I love Ishmael! Oh, how much, my reason, utterly overthrown, may some time betray to the world! This love fills my soul. Oh, more than that, it is greater than my soul; it goes beyond it, into infinitude! There is light, warmth, and life where Ishmael is; darkness, coldness, and death where he is not! To meet his eyes,—those beautiful, dark, luminous eyes, that seem like inlets to some perfect inner world of wisdom, love, and pure joy; or to lay my hand in his, and feel that soft, strong, elastic hand close upon mine,—gives me a moment of such measureless content, such perfect assurance of peace, that for the time I forget all the sin and horror that envelops and curses my life. But to be his beloved wife—oh, Bee! I cannot imagine in the life of heaven a diviner happiness!"

A low, half-suppressed cry from Bee. And Claudia continued:

"It is a love that all which is best in my nature approves. For oh, who is like Ishmael? Who so wise, so good, so useful? Morally, intellectually, and physically beautiful! an Apollo! more than that, a Christian gentleman! He is human, and yet he appears to me to be perfectly faultless."

There was a pause and a low sound of weeping, broken at last by Claudia, who rustled up to her feet, saying:

"There, it is past!"

"Claudia," said Bee solemnly, "you must not let this marriage go on; to do so would be to commit the deadliest sin!"

"I have determined to commit it, then, Bee."

"Claudia, if I saw you on the brink of endless woe, would I not be justified in trying to pluck you back? Oh, Claudia, dear cousin, pause, reflect—"

"Bee, hush! I have reflected until my brain has nearly burst. I must fulfill my destiny. I must be a peeress of England, cost what it may in sin against others, or in suffering to myself."

"Oh, what an awful resolution! and what an awful defiance! Ah, what have you invoked upon your head!"

"I know not—the curse of Heaven, perhaps!"

"Claudia!"

"Be silent, Bee!"

"I must not, cannot, will not, be silent! My hand is weak, but it shall grasp your arm to hold you back; my voice is low, but it shall be raised in remonstrance with you. You may break from my hold; you may deafen yourself to my words; you may escape me so; but it will be to cast yourself into—"

"Lawyer Vivian's 'gulf of perdition'! Is that what you mean? Nonsense, Bee. My hysterics are over now; my hour of weakness is past; I am myself again. And I feel that I shall be Lady Vincent—the envy of Washington, the admiration of London, the only titled lady of the republican court, and the only beauty at St. James!" said Claudia, rustling a deep curtsy.

"Claudia—"

"And in time I shall be Countess of Hurstmonceaux, and perhaps after a while Marchioness of Banff; for Vincent thinks if the Conservatives come in his father will be raised a step in the peerage."

"And is it for that you sell yourself? Oh, Claudia, how Satan fools you! Be rational; consider: what is it to be a countess, or even a marchioness? It is 'distance lends enchantment to the view.' Here in this country, where, thank the Lord, there is no hereditary rank,—no titles and no coronets,—these things, from their remoteness, impress your imagination, and disturb your judgment. You will not feel so in England; there, where there are hundreds and thousands of titled personages, your coveted title will sink to its proper level, and you will find yourself of much less importance in

London as Lady Vincent, than you are in Washington as Miss Merlin. There you will find how little you have really gained by the sacrifice of truth, honor, and purity; all that is best in your woman's nature—all that is best in your earthly, yes, and your eternal life."

"Bee, have you done?"

"No. You have given me two reasons why I think you ought not to marry the viscount: first, because you do not love him, and secondly, because you do love—someone else. And now I will give you two more reasons why you should not marry him—viz., first, because he is not a good man, and, secondly, because he does not love you. There!" said Beatrice firmly.

"Bee, how dare you say that! What should you know of his character? And why should you think he does not love me?"

"I feel that he is not a good man; so do you, I will venture to say, Claudia. And I know that he marries you for some selfish or mercenary motive—your money, possibly. And so also do you know it, Claudia, I dare to affirm."

"Have you anything more to say?"

"Only this: to beg, to pray, to urge you not to sin—not to debase yourself! Oh, Claudia, if loving Ishmael as you profess to do, and loathing the viscount as you confess you do, and knowing that he cares nothing for you, you still marry him for his title and his rank, as you admit you will—Claudia! Claudia! in the pure sight of angels you will be more guilty, and less pardonable than the poor lost creatures of the pavement, whose shadow you would scarcely allow to fall across your path!"

"Bee, you insult, you offend, you madden me! If this be so—if you speak the truth—I cannot help it, and I do not care. I am ambitious. If I immolate all my womanly feelings to become a peeress, it is as I would certainly and ruthlessly destroy everything that stood in my way to become a queen, if that were possible."

"Good heavens, Claudia! are you then really a fiend in female form?" exclaimed the dismayed girl.

"I do not know. I may be so. I think Satan has taken possession of me since my betrothal. At least I feel that I could be capable of great crimes to secure great ends," said Claudia recklessly.

"And, oh, Heaven! the opportunity will be surely afforded you, if you do not repent. Satan takes good care to give his servants the fullest freedom to develop their evil. Oh, Claudia, for the love of Heaven, stop where you are! go no

further. Your next step on this sinful road may make retreat impossible. Break off this marriage at once. Better the broken troth—better the nine days' wonder—than the perjured bride, and the loveless, sinful nuptials! You said you were ambitious. Claudia!" here Bee's voice grew almost inaudible from intense passion—"Claudia! you do not know—you cannot know what it costs me to say what I am about to say to you now; but—I will say it: You love Ishmael. Well, he loves you—ah! far better than you love him, or than you are capable of loving anyone. For you all his toils have been endured, all his laurels won. Claudia! be proud of this great love; it is a hero's love—a poet's love. Claudia! you have received much adulation in your life, and you will receive much more; but you never have received, and you never will, so high an honor as you have in Ishmael's love. It is a crown of glory to your life. You are ambitious! Well, wait for him; give him a few short years and he will attain honors, not hereditary, but all his own. He will reach a position that the proudest woman may be proud to share; and his wife shall take a higher rank among American matrons than the wife of a mere nobleman can reach in England. And his untitled name, like that of Cæsar, shall be a title in itself."

"Bee! Bee! you wring my heart in two. You drive me mad. It cannot be, I tell you! It can never be. He may rise—there is no doubt but that he will! But let him rise ever so high, I cannot be his wife—his wife! Horrible! I came of a race of which all the men were brave, and all the women pure! And he—"

"Is braver than the bravest man of your race! purer than the purest woman!" interrupted Bee fervently.

"He is the child of shame, and his heritage is dishonor! He bears his mother's maiden name, and she was—the scorn of his sex and the reproach of ours! And this is the man you advise me, Claudia Merlin, whose hand is sought in marriage by the heir of one of the oldest earldoms in England, to marry! Bee, the insult is unpardonable! You might as well advise me to marry my father's footman! and better, for Powers came at least of honest parents!" said Claudia, speaking in the mad, reckless, defiant way in which those conscious of a bad argument passionately defend their point.

For a few moments Bee seemed speechless with indignation. Then she burst forth vehemently:

"It is false! as false as the Father of Falsehood himself! When thorns produce figs, or the deadly nightshade nectarines; when eaglets are hatched in owls' nests and young lions

spring from rat holes, then I may believe these foul slanders of Ishmael and his parents. Shame on you, Claudia Merlin, for repeating them! You have shown me much evil in your heart to-night; but nothing so bad as that! Ishmael is nature's gentleman! His mother must have been pure and lovely and loving! his father good and wise and brave! else how could they have given this son to the world! And did you forget, Claudia, when you spoke those cruel words of him, did you forget that only a little while ago you admitted that you loved him, and all which was best in your nature approved that love?"

"No, I did not and do not forget it! It was and it is true! But what of that? I may not be able to help adoring him for his personal excellence! But to be his wife—the wife of a—Horrible!"

"Have you forgotten, Claudia, that only a few minutes ago you said that you could not conceive of a diviner happiness than to be the beloved wife of Ishmael?"

"No, I have not forgotten it! And I spoke the truth! but that joy which I could so keenly appreciate can never, never be mine! And that is the secret of my madness—for I am mad, Bee! And, oh, I came here to-night with my torn and bleeding heart—torn and bleeding from the dreadful battle between love and pride—came here with my suffering heart; my sinful heart if you will; and laid it on your bosom to be soothed; and you have taken it and flung it back in my face! You have broken the bruised reed; quenched the smoking flax; humbled the humble; smitten the fallen! Oh, Bee, you have been more cruel than you know! Good-by! Good-by!" And she turned and flung herself out of the room.

CHAPTER XXXVI

ISHMAEL'S WOE

Ishmael sat in the shadows of his room overwhelmed with shame and sorrow and despair. He had heard every cruel word; they had entered his ears and pierced his heart. And not only for himself he bowed his head and sorrowed and despaired, but for her; for her, proud, selfish, sinful, but loving, and oh, how fatally beloved!

It was not only that he worshiped her with a blind idolatry,

and knew that she returned his passion with equal strength and fervor, and that she would have waited for him long years, and married him at last but for the cloud upon his birth. It was not this—not his misery that crushed him, nor even her present wretchedness that prostrated him—no! but it was the awful, shapeless shadow of some infinite unutterable woe in Claudia's future, and into which she was blindly rushing, that overwhelmed him. Oh, to have saved her from this woe, he would gladly have laid down his life!

He was interrupted by the arrival of Walter Middleton and he arose from his meditation to prepare for dinner. With some degree of self-possession Ishmael completed his toilet and turned to leave the room, when the sound of someone rushing up the stairs like a storm arrested his steps.

Then a voice sounded outside:

"Which is Ishmael's room? Bother! Oh, here it is!" and Bee's door was opened. "No! calico! Ah! now I'm right."

And the next instant Walter Middleton burst open the door and rushed in, exclaiming joyfully, as he seized and shook the hands of his friend:

"Ah, here you are, old fellow! God bless you! How glad I am to see you! You are still the first love of my heart, Ishmael. Damon, your Pythias has not even a sweetheart to dispute your empire over him. How are you? I have heard of your success. Wasn't it glorious! You're a splendid fellow, Ishmael, and I'm proud of you. You may have Bee, if you want her. I always thought there was a bashful kindness between you two. And there isn't a reason in the world why you shouldn't have her. And so her Royal Highness, the Princess Claudia, has caught a Lord, has she? Well, you know she always said she would, and she has kept her word. But, I say, how are you? How do you wear your honors? How do the toga and the bays become you? Turn around and let us have a look at you." And so the affectionate fellow rattled on, shaking both Ishmael's hands every other second, until he had talked himself fairly out of breath.

"And how are you, dear Walter? But I need not ask; you look so well and happy," said Ishmael, as soon as he could get in a word.

"Me? Oh, I'm well enough. Nought's never in danger. I've just graduated, you know; with the highest honors, they say. My thesis won the great prize; that was because you were not in the same class, you know. I have my diploma in my pocket; I'm an M. D.; I can write myself doctor, and poison people, without danger of being tried for murder!

isn't that a privilege? Now let my enemies take care of themselves! Why don't you congratulate me, you—"

"I do, with all my heart and soul, Walter!"

"That's right! only I had to drag it from you. Well, so I'm to be 'best man' to this noble bridegroom. Too much honor. I am not prepared for it. One cannot get ready for graduating and marrying at the same time. I don't think I have got a thing fit to wear. I wrote to Bee to buy me some fine shirts, and some studs, and gloves, and handkerchiefs, and hair oil, and things proper for the occasion. I wonder if she did?"

"I don't know. I know that she has been overwhelmed with care for the last month, too much care for a girl, so it is just possible that she has had no opportunity. Indeed, she has a great deal to think of and to do."

"Oh, it won't hurt her; especially if it consists of preparations for the wedding."

A bell rang.

"There now, Ishmael, there is that diabolical dinner-bell! You may look, but it is true: a dinner-bell that peals out at seven o'clock in the evening is a diabolical dinner-bell. At college we dine at twelve meridian, sharp, and sup at six. It is dreadful to sit at table a whole hour, and be bored by seeing other people eat, and pretending to eat yourself, when you are not hungry. Well, there's no help for it. Come down and be bored, Ishmael."

They went down into the drawing-room where quite a large circle of near family connections were assembled.

Walter Middleton was presented to the Viscount Vincent, who was the only stranger, to him, present.

Claudia was there, looking as calm, as self-possessed and queenly, as if she had not passed through a storm of passion two hours before.

Ishmael glanced at her and saw the change with amazement, but he dared not trust himself to look again.

The dinner party, with all this trouble under the surface, passed off in superficial gayety. The guests separated early, because the following morning would usher in the wedding day.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE MARRIAGE MORNING

Ishmael awoke. After a restless night, followed by an hour's complete forgetfulness, that more nearly resembled the swoon of exhaustion than the sleep of health, Ishmael awoke to a new sense of wretchedness.

You who have suffered know what such awakenings are. You have seen someone dearer than life die; but hours, days, or weeks of expectation have gradually prepared you for the last scene; and though you have seen the dear one die, and though you have wept yourself half blind and half dead, you have slept the sleep of utter oblivion, which is like death: but you have at last awakened and returned to consciousness to meet the shock of memory and the sense of sorrow a thousand times more overwhelming than the first blow of bereavement had been.

Or you have been for weeks looking forward to the parting of one whose presence is the very light of your days. And in making preparations for that event the thought of coming separation has been somewhat dulled; but at last all is ready; the last night has come; you all separate and go to bed, with the mutual injunction to be up early in the morning for the sake of seeing "him"—it may be some brave volunteer going to war—off; after lying awake nearly all night you suddenly drop into utter forgetfulness of impending grief, and into some sweet dream of pleasantness and peace. You awake with a start; the hour has come; the hour of parting; the hour of doom.

Yes, whatever the grief may be, it is in the hour of such awakenings we feel it most poignantly.

Thus it was with Ishmael. The instant he awoke the spear of memory transfixed his soul. He could have cried out in his agony. It took all his manhood to control his pain. He arose and dressed himself and offered up his morning worship and went to the breakfast room, resolved to pass through the day's fiery ordeal, cost what it might.

Claudia was not at breakfast. In fact, she seldom or never appeared at the breakfast table; and this morning of all mornings it was quite natural she should be absent. But Mrs.

Middleton and Bee, Judge Merlin, Mr. Middleton, Mr. Brudenell, Walter, and Ishmael were present. It was in order that people should be merry on a marriage morning; but somehow or other that order was not followed. Judge Merlin, Mrs. Middleton, and Bee were unusually grave and silent; Mr. Brudenell was always sad; Ishmael was no conventional talker, and therefore could not seem other than he was—very serious. It was quite in vain that Mr. Middleton and Walter tried to get up a little jesting and badinage. And when the constraint of the breakfast table was over everyone felt relieved.

"Remember," said Mrs. Middleton, with her hand upon the back of her chair, "that the carriages will be at the door at half-past ten; it is now half-past nine."

"And that means that we have but an hour to get on our wedding garments," said Walter. "Bee, have you got my finery ready?"

"You will find everything you require laid out on your bed, Walter."

"You are the best little sister that ever was born. I doubt whether I shall let Ishmael, or anyone else, have you until I get a wife of my own; and even then I don't know but what I shall want you home to look after her and the children!" prattled Walter, careless or unobservant of the deep blush that mantled the maiden's face.

"Ishmael," said the Judge, "I wish you to take the fourth seat in the carriage with myself and daughter and Beatrice. Will you do so?"

Ishmael's emotions nearly choked him, but he answered:

"Certainly, if you wish."

"The four bridesmaids will fill the second carriage, and Mr. and Mrs. Middleton, Mr. Brudenell and Walter the third. I do not know the arrangements made for our other friends; but I dare say it is all right. Oh, Ishmael, I feel as though we were arranging a procession to the grave instead of the altar," he added, with a heavy sigh. Then correcting himself, he said: "But this is all very morbid. So no more of it."

And the judge wrung Ishmael's hand; and each went his separate way to dress for the wedding.

Meanwhile the bride-elect sat alone in her luxurious dressing room.

Around her, scattered over tables, chairs, and stands, lay the splendid paraphernalia of her bridal array—rich dresses, mantles, bonnets, veils, magnificent shawls, sparkling jewels, blooming flowers, intoxicating perfumes.

On the superb malachite stand beside her stood a silver tray, on which was arranged an elegant breakfast service of Bohemian china. But the breakfast was untasted and forgotten.

There was no one to watch her; she had sent her maid away with orders not to return until summoned by her bell.

And now, while her coffee unheeded grew cold, she sat, leaning forward in her easy-chair, with her hands tightly clasped together over her knees, her tumbled black ringlets fallen down upon her dressing gown, and her eyes flared open and fixed in a dreadful stare upon the far distance as if spell-bound by some horror there.

To have seen her thus, knowing that she was a bride-elect you might have judged that she was about to be forced into some loathed marriage, from which her whole tortured nature revolted.

And you would have judged truly. She was being thus forced into such a marriage, not by any tyrannical parent or guardian, for flesh and blood could not have forced Claudia Merlin into any measure she had set her will against. She was forced by the demon Pride, who had taken possession of her soul.

And now she sat alone with her sin, dispossessed of all her better self, face to face with her lost soul.

She was aroused by the entrance of Mrs. Middleton—Mrs Middleton in full carriage-dress—robe and mantle of mauve colored moire-antique, a white lace bonnet with mauve colored flowers, and white kid gloves finished at the wrists with mauve ribbon quillings.

"Why, Claudia, is it possible? Not commenced dressing yet, and everybody else ready, and the clock on the stroke of ten! What have you been thinking of, child?"

Claudia started like one suddenly aroused from sleep, threw her hands to her face as if to clear away a mist, and looked around.

But Mrs. Middleton had hurried to the door and was calling

"Here, Alice! Laura! 'Gena! Lotty! Where are you?"

Receiving no answer, she flew to the bell and rang it and brought Claudia's maid to the room.

"Ruth, hurry to the young ladies' room and give my compliments, and ask them to come here as soon as possible! Miss Merlin is not yet dressed."

The girl went on her errand and Mrs. Middleton turned again to Claudia:

"Not even eaten your breakfast yet. Oh, Claudia!" and she poured out a cup of coffee and handed it to her niece.

And Claudia drank it, because it was easier to do so than to expostulate.

At the moment that Claudia returned the cup the door opened and the four bridesmaids entered—all dressed in floating, cloud-like, misty white tulle, and crowned with wreaths of white roses and holding bouquets of the same.

They lay down their bouquets, drew off their white gloves and fluttered around the bride and with their busy fingers quickly dressed her luxuriant black hair, and arrayed her stately form in her superb bridal dress.

This dress was composed of an under-skirt of the richest white satin and an upper robe of the finest Valenciennes lace looped up with bunches of orange flowers. A bertha of lace fell over the satin bodice. And a long veil of lace flowed from the queenly head down to the tiny foot. A wreath of orange flowers, sprinkled over with the icy dew of small diamonds, crowned her black ringlets. And diamonds adorned her neck, bosom, arms, and stomacher. Her bouquet holder was studded with diamonds, and her initials on the white velvet cover of her prayer-book were formed of tiny seed-like diamonds.

No sovereign queen on her bridal morn was ever more richly arrayed. But, oh, how deadly pale and cold she was!

"There!" they said triumphantly, when they had finished dressing her, even to the arranging of the bouquet of orange flowers in its costly holder and putting it in her hand. "There!" And they wheeled the tall Psyche mirror up before her, that she might view and admire herself.

She looked thoughtfully at the image reflected there, She looked so long that Mrs. Middleton, growing impatient, said:

"My love, it is time to go."

"Leave me alone for a few minutes, all of you! I will not keep you waiting long," said Claudia.

"She wishes to be alone to offer up a short prayer before being to be married," was the thought in the heart of each one of the party, as they filed out of the room.

Did Claudia wish to pray? Did she intend to ask God's protection against evil? Did she dare to ask his blessing on the act she contemplated?

We shall see.

She went after the last retreating figure and closed and bolted the door. Then she returned to her dressing bureau, opened a little secret drawer and took from it a tiny jar of

rouge, and with a piece of cotton-wool applied it to her deathly-white cheeks until she had produced there an artificial bloom, more brilliant than that of her happiest days, only because it was more brilliant than that of nature. Then to soften its fire she powdered her face with pearl white, and finally with a fine handkerchief carefully dusted off the superfluous particles.

Having done this, she put away her cosmetics and took from the same receptacle a vial of the spirits of lavender and mixed a spoonful of it with water and drank it off.

Then she returned the vial to its place and locked up the secret drawer where she kept her deceptions.

She gave one last look at the mirror, saw that between the artificial bloom and the artificial stimulant her face presented a passable counterfeit of its long-lost radiance; she drew her bridal veil around so as to shade it a little, lowered her head and raised her bouquet, that her friends might not see the suspicious suddenness of the transformation from deadly pallor to living bloom—for though Claudia, in an hour of hysterical passion, had discovered this secret of her toilet to Beatrice, yet she was really ashamed of it, and wished to conceal it from all others.

She opened the door, went out, and joined her friends in the hall, saying with a cheerfulness that she had found in the lavender vial:

"I am quite ready for the show now!"

But she kept her head lowered and averted, for a little while, though in fact her party were too much excited to scrutinize her appearance, especially as they had had a good view of her while making her toilet.

They went down into the drawing-room, where the family and their nearest relations were assembled and waiting for them.

Bee was there, looking lovely as usual. Bee, who almost always wore white when in full dress, now varied from her custom by wearing a glacé silk of delicate blue, with a white lace mantle and a white lace bonnet and veil. Bee did this because she did not mean to be mustered into the bride's service, or even mistaken by any person for one of the brides-maids. Beyond her obligatory presence in the church as one of the bride's family, Bee was resolved to have nothing to do with the sacrilegious marriage.

"Come, my dear! Are you ready? How beautiful you are, my Claudia! I never paid you a compliment before, my child; but surely I may be excused for doing so now that you

are about to leave me! 'How blessings brighten as they take heir flight,'" whispered the judge, as he met and kissed his daughter.

And certainly Claudia's beauty seemed perfectly dazzling his morning. She smiled a greeting to all her friends assembled there, and then gave her hand to her father, who drew t within his arm and led her to the carriage.

Ishmael, like one in a splendid, terrible dream, from which ne could not wake, in which he was obliged to act, went up o Bee and drew her little white-gloved hand under his arm, and led her after the father and daughter.

The other members of the marriage party followed in order.

Besides Judge Merlin's brougham and Mr. Middleton's barouche, there were several other carriages drawn up before he house.

Bee surveyed this retinue and murmured:

"Indeed, except that we all wear light colors instead of black, and the coachmen have no hat-scarfs, this looks quite as much like a funeral as a wedding."

Ishmael did not reply; he could not wake from the dazzling, horrible dream.

When they were seated in the carriage, Claudia and Beatrice occupied the back seat; the judge and Ishmael the front ones; the judge sat opposite Bee, and Ishmael opposite Claudia.

The rich drifts of shining white satin and misty white lace that formed her bridal dress floated around him; her foot inadvertently touched his, and her warm, balmy breath passed him. Never had he been so close to Claudia before; that carriage was so confined and crowded—dread proximity! The dream deepened; it became a trance—that strange trance that sometimes falls upon the victim in the midst of his sufferings held Ishmael's faculties in abeyance and deadened his sense of pain.

And indeed the same spell, though with less force, acted upon all the party in that carriage. Its mood was expectant, excited, yet dream-like. There was scarcely any conversation. There seldom is under such circumstances. Once the judge inquired:

"Bee, my dear, how is it that you are not one of Claudia's bridesmaids?"

"I did not wish to be, and Claudia was so kind as to excuse me," Beatrice replied.

"But why not, my love? I thought young ladies always liked to fill such positions."

Bee blushed and lowered her head, but did not reply.

Claudia answered for her:

"Beatrice does not like Lord Vincent; and does not approve of the marriage," she said defiantly.

"Humph!" exclaimed the judge, and not another word was spoken during the drive.

It was a rather long one. The church selected for the performance of the marriage rites being St. John's, at the west end of the town, where the bridegroom and his friends were to meet the bride and her attendants.

They reached the church at last; the other carriages arrived a few seconds after them, and the whole party alighted and went in.

The bridegroom and his friends were already there. And the bridal procession formed and went up the middle aisle to the altar, where the bishop in his sacerdotal robes stood ready to perform the ceremony.

The bridal party formed before the altar, the bishop opened the book, and the ceremony commenced. It proceeded according to the ritual, and without the slightest deviation from commonplace routine.

When the bishop came to that part of the rites in which he utters the awful adjuration—"I require and charge you both as ye shall answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it. For be ye well assured, that if any persons are joined together, otherwise than God's word doth allow, their marriage is not lawful,"—Bee, who was standing with her mother and father near the bridal circle, looked up at the bride.

Oh, could Claudia, loving another, loathing the bridegroom kneel in that sacred church, before that holy altar, in the presence of God's minister, in the presence of God himself hear that solemn adjuration, and persevere in her awful sin!

Yes, Claudia could! as tens of thousands, from ignorance, from insensibility, or from recklessness, have done before her and as tens of thousands more, from the same causes, will do after her.

The ceremony proceeded until it reached the part where the ring is placed upon the bride's finger, and all went well enough until, as they were rising from the prayer of "Our Father," the bride happened to lower her hand, and the ring

which was too large for her finger, dropped off, and rolled away and passed out of sight.

The ceremony ended, and the ring was sought for; but could not be found. Seeing at length that their search was quite fruitless, the gentlemen of the bridal train reluctantly gave up the ring for lost, and the whole party filed into the chancel to enter their names in the register, that lay for this purpose on the communion table.

The bridegroom first approached and wrote his. It was a prolonged and sonorous roll of names, such as frequently compose the tail of a nobleman's title:

Malcolm — Victor — Stuart — Douglass — Gordon — Dugald, Viscount Vincent.

Then the bride signed hers, and the witnesses theirs.

When Mr. Brudenell came to sign his own name as one of the witnesses, he happened to glance at the bridegroom's long train of names. He read them over with a smile at their length, but his eye fastened upon the last one—"Dugald," "Dugald"? Herman Brudenell, like the immortal Burton, thought he had "heard that name before," in fact, was sure he had "heard that name before!" Yes, verily; he had heard it in connection with his sister's fatal flight, in which a certain Captain Dugald had been her companion! And he resolved to make cautious inquiries of the viscount. He had known Lord Vincent on the Continent, but he had either never happened to hear what his family name was, or if he had chanced to do so, he had forgotten the circumstances. At all events, it was not until the instant in which he read the viscount's signature in the register that he discovered the family name of Lord Vincent and the disreputable name of Eleanor Brudenell's unprincipled lover to be the same.

But this was no time for brooding over the subject. He affixed his own signature, which was the last one on the list, and then joined the bridal party, who were now leaving the church.

At the door a signal change took place in the order of the procession.

Lord Vincent, with a courtesy as earnest and a smile as beaming as gallantry and the occasion required, handed his bride into his own carriage.

Judge Merlin, Ishmael, and Beatrice rode together.

And others returned in the order in which they had come.

Ishmael was coming out of that strange, benumbed state that had deadened for a while all his sense of suffering—coming back to a consciousness of utter bereavement and insup-

portable anguish—anguish written in such awful characters upon his pallid and writhen brow that Beatrice and her uncle exchanged glances of wonder and alarm.

But Ishmael, in his fixed agony, did not perceive the looks of anxiety they turned towards him—did not even perceive the passage of time or space, until they arrived at home again, and the wedding guests once more began to alight from the carriages.

The party temporarily separated in the hall, the ladies dispersing each to her own chamber to make some trifling change in her toilet before appearing in the drawing-room.

"Ishmael, come here, my lad," said the judge, as soon as they were left alone.

Ishmael mechanically followed him to the little breakfast parlor of the family, where on the sideboard sat decanters of brandy and wine, and pitchers of water, and glasses of all shapes and sizes.

He poured out two glasses of brandy—one for himself and one for Ishmael.

"Let us drink the health of the newly-married couple," he said, pushing one glass towards Ishmael, and raising the other to his own lips.

But Ishmael hesitated, and poured out a tumbler of pure water, saying, in a faint voice:

"I will drink her health in this."

"Nonsense! put it down. You are chilled enough without drinking that to throw you into an ague. Drink something warm and strong, boy! drink something warm and strong I tell you, I, for one, cannot get through this day without some such support as this," said the judge authoritatively, as he took from the young man's nerveless hand the harmless glass of water, and put into it the perilous glass of brandy.

For ah! good men do wicked things sometimes, and wise men foolish ones.

Still Ishmael hesitated; for even in the midst of his great trouble he heard the "still small voice" of some good angel—it might have been his mother's spirit—whispering to him to dash from his lips the Circean draft, that would indeed allay his sense of suffering for a few minutes, but might endanger his character through all his life and his soul through all eternity. The voice that whispered this, as I said, was a "still, small voice" speaking softly within him. But the voice of the judge was bluff and hearty, and he stood there, a visible presence, enforcing his advice with strength of action.

And Ishmael, scarcely well assured of what he did, put the

glass to his lips and quaffed the contents, and felt at once falsely exhilarated.

"Come, now, we will go into the drawing-room. I dare say they are all down by this time," said the judge. And in they went.

He was right in his conjecture; the wedding guests were all assembled there.

And soon after his entrance the sliding doors between the drawing-room and the dining room were pushed back, and Devizac, who was the presiding genius of the wedding feast, appeared and announced that breakfast was served.

The company filed in—the bride and bridegroom walking together, and followed by the bridesmaids and the gentlemen of the party.

Ishmael gave his arm to Beatrice. Mr. Brudenell conducted Mrs. Middleton, and the judge led one of the lady guests.

The walls were covered with frescoes of Venus, Psyche, Cupid, the Graces, and the Muses, seen among the rosy bowers and shady groves of Arcadia. The ceiling was covered with celestial scenery, in the midst of which was seen the cloudy court of Jupiter and Juno and their attendant gods and goddesses; the pillars were covered with gilding and twined with flowers, and long wreaths of flowers connected one pillar with another and festooned the doorways and windows and the corners of the room.

The breakfast table was a marvel of art—blazing with gold plate, blooming and beautiful and fragrant exotics, and intoxicating with the aroma of the richest and rarest viands.

At the upper end of the room a temporary raised and gilded balcony wreathed with roses was occupied by Dureezie's celebrated band, who, as the company came in, struck up an inspiring bridal march composed expressly for this occasion.

The wedding party took their seats at the table and the feasting began. The viands were carved and served and praised. The bride's cake was cut and the slices distributed. The ring fell to one of the bridesmaids and provoked the usual badinage. The wine circulated freely.

Mr. Middleton arose and in a neat little speech proposed the fair bride's health, which proposal was hailed with enthusiasm.

Judge Merlin, in another little speech, returned thanks to the company, and begged leave to propose the bridegroom's health, which was duly honored.

Then it was Lord Vincent's turn to rise and express his gratitude and propose Judge Merlin's health.

This necessitated a second rising of the judge, who after making due acknowledgments of the compliments paid him, proposed—the fair bridesmaids.

And so the breakfast proceeded.

They sat at table an hour, and then, at a signal from Mrs. Middleton, all arose.

The gentlemen adjourned to the little breakfast parlor to drink a parting glass with their host in something stronger than the light French breakfast wines they had been quaffing so freely.

And the bride, followed by all her attendants, went up to her room to change her bridal robe and veil for her traveling dress and bonnet; as the pair were to take the one o'clock train to Baltimore en route for New York, Niagara, and the Lakes.

She found her dressing room all restored to the dreary good order that spoke of abandonment. Her rich dresses and jewels and bridal presents were all packed up. And every trunk was locked and corded and ready for transportation to the railway station, except one large trunk that stood open with its upper tray waiting for the bridal dress she was about to put off.

Ruth, who had been very busy with all this packing, while the wedding party were at church and at breakfast, now stood with the brown silk dress and mantle that was to be Claudia's traveling costume, laid over her arm.

Claudia, assisted by Mrs. Middleton, changed her dress with the feverish haste of one who longed to get a painful ordeal over; and while Ruth hastily packed away the wedding finery and closed the last trunk, Claudia tied on her brown silk bonnet and drew on her gloves and expressed herself ready to depart.

They went downstairs to the drawing-room, where all the wedding guests were once more gathered to see the young pair off.

There was no time to lose, and so all her friends gathered around the bride to receive her adieus and to express their good wishes.

One by one she bade them farewell.

When she came to her cousin, Bee burst into tears and whispered:

"God forgive you, poor Claudia! God avert from you all evil consequences of your own act!"

She caught her breath, wrung Bee's hand and turned away, and looked around. She had taken leave of all except her father and Ishmael.

Her father she knew would accompany her as far as the railway station, for he had said as much.

But there was Ishmael.

As she went up to him slowly and fearfully, every vein and artery in her body seemed to throb with the agony of her heart. She tried to speak; but could not utter no articulate sound. She held out her hand; but he did not take it; then she lifted her beautiful eyes to his, with a glance so helpless, so anguished, so imploring, as if silently praying from him some kind word before she should go, that Ishmael's generous heart was melted and he took her hand and pressing it while he spoke, said in low and fervent tones:

"God bless you, Lady Vincent. God shield you from all evil. God save you in every crisis of your life."

And she bowed her head, lowly and humbly, to receive this benediction as though it had been uttered by an authorized minister of God.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

BEE'S HANDKERCHIEF

But a mist fell before Ishmael's eyes, and when it cleared away Claudia was gone.

The young bridesmaids were chattering gayly in a low, melodious tone with each other, and with the gentlemen of the party filling the room with a musical hum of many happy voices.

But all this seemed unreal and dreadful, like the illusions of troubled sleep. And so Ishmael left the drawing-room and went up to the office, to see if perhaps he could find real life there.

There lay the parcels of papers tied up with red tape, the open books that he had consulted the day before, and the letters that had come by the morning's mail.

He sat down wearily to the table and began to open his letters. One by one he read and laid them aside. One important letter, bearing upon a case he had on hand, he laid by itself.

Then rising, he gathered up his documents, put them into his pocket, took his hat and gloves and went to the City Hall.

This day of suffering, like all other days, was a day of duties also.

It was now one o'clock, the hour at which the train started which carried Claudia away.

It was also the hour at which a case was appointed to be heard before the Judge of the Orphan's Court—a case in which the guardianship of certain fatherless and motherless children was disputed between a grandmother and an uncle and in which Ishmael was counsel for the plaintiff. He appeared in court, punctually to the minute, found his client waiting for him there, and as soon as the judge had taken his seat the young counsel opened the case. By a strong effort of will he wrested his thoughts from his own great sorrow and engaged them in the interests of the anxious old lady who was striving for the possession of her grandchildren only from the love she bore them and their mother, her own dead daughter; while her opponent wished only to have the management of their large fortune.

It was nature that pleaded through the lips of the eloquent young counsel, and he gained this case also.

But he was ill in mind and body. He could scarcely bear the thanks and congratulations of his client and her friends.

The old lady had retained him by one large fee, and now she placed another and a larger one in his hands; but he could not have told whether the single banknote was for five dollars or five hundred, as he mechanically received it and placed it in his pocketbook.

And then, with the courteous bow and smile, never omitted, because they were natural and habitual, he turned and left the courtroom.

"What is the matter with Worth?" inquired one lawyer.

"Can't imagine; he looks very ill; shouldn't wonder if he was going to have a congestion of the brain. It looks like it. He works too hard," replied another.

Old Wiseman, the law-thunderer, who had been the counsel opposed to Ishmael in this last case, and who, in fact was always professionally opposed to him, but, nevertheless, personally friendly towards him, had also noticed his pale haggard, and distracted looks, and now hurried after him in the fear that he should fall before reaching home.

He overtook Ishmael in the lobby. The young man was standing leaning on the balustrade at the head of the stairs as if unable to take another step.

Wiseman bent over him.

"Worth, my dear fellow, what is the matter with you? Does it half kill you to overthrow me at law?"

"I—fear that I am not well," replied Ishmael, in a hollow voice, and with a haggard smile.

"What is it? Only exhaustion, I hope? You have been working too hard, and you never even left the courtroom to take any refreshments to-day. You are too much in earnest, my young friend. You take too much pains. You apply yourself too closely. Why, bless my life, you could floor us all any day with half the trouble! But you must always use a trip-hammer to drive tin tacks. Take my arm, and let us go and get something."

And the stout lawyer drew the young man's arm within his own and led him to a restaurant that was kept on the same floor for the convenience of the courts and their officers and other habitués of the City Hall.

Wiseman called for the best old Otard brandy, and poured out half a tumblerful, and offered it to Ishmael. It was a dose that might have been swallowed with impunity by a seasoned old toper like Wiseman; but certainly not by an abstinent young man like Ishmael, who, yielding to the fatal impulse to get rid of present suffering by any means, at any cost, or any risk, took the tumbler and swallowed the brandy.

Ah, Heaven have mercy on the sorely-tried and tempted!

This was only the third glass of alcholic stimulants that Ishmael had ever taken in the whole course of his life.

On the first occasion, the day of Claudia's betrothal, the glass had been placed in his hand and urged upon his acceptance by his honored old friend, Judge Merlin.

On the second occasion, the morning of this day, of Claudia's marriage, the glass had also been offered him by Judge Merlin.

And on the third occasion, this afternoon of the terrible day of trial and suffering, it was placed to his lips by the respectable old lawyer, Wiseman.

Alas! alas!

On the first occasion Ishmael had protested long before he yielded; on the second he had hesitated a little while; but on the third he took the offered glass and drank the brandy without an instant's doubt or pause.

"Well?" said old Wiseman as he received the glass from Ishmael's hand and set it down.

"I thank you; it has done me good; I feel much better; you are very kind," said Ishmael.

"I wish you would really think so, and go into partnership

with me. My business is very heavy—much more than I can manage alone, now that I am growing old and stout; and I must have somebody, and I would rather have you than anyone else. You would succeed to the whole business after my death, you know."

"Thank you; your offering is very flattering. I will think it over, and talk with you on some future occasion. Now I feel that I must return home, while I have strength to do so," replied Ishmael.

"Very well, then, my dear fellow, I will let you off."

And they shook hands and parted.

Ishmael feeling soothed, strengthened, and exhilarated, set off to walk home. But this feeling gradually passed off, giving place to a weakness, heaviness, and feverishness, that warned him he was in no state to appear at Judge Merlin's dinner table.

So when he approached the house he opened a little side gate leading into the back grounds, and strayed into the shrubbery feeling every minute more feverish, heavy, and drowsy.

At last he strayed into an arbor, quite at the bottom of the shrubberies, where he sank down upon the circular bench and fell into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile up at the house changes had taken place. The wedding guests had all departed. The festive garments had been laid away. The decorated dining room had been shut up. The household had returned to its usual sober aspect, and the plain family dinner was laid in the little breakfast parlor. But the house was very sad and silent and lonely because its queen was gone. At the usual dinner-hour, six o'clock, the family assembled at the table.

"Where is Ishmael, uncle?" inquired Beatrice.

"I do not know, my dear," replied the judge, whose heart was sore with the wrench that had torn his daughter from him.

"Do you, papa?"

"No, dear."

"Mamma, have you seen Ishmael since the morning?"

"No, child."

"Nor you, Walter?"

"Nor I, Bee."

Mr. Brudenell looked up at the fair young creature, who took such thought of his absent son, and volunteered to say:

"He had a case before the Orphans' Court to-day, I believe. But the court is adjourned, I know, because I met the judge

n hour ago at the Capitol; so I suppose he will be here oon."

Bee bowed in acknowledgment of this information, but she id not feel at all reassured. She had noticed Ishmael's readful pallor that morning; she felt how much he suffered, nd she feared some evil consequences; though her worst uspicions never touched the truth.

"Uncle," she said, blushing deeply to be obliged still to etray her interest in one whom she was forced to remember, ecause everyone else forgot him, "uncle, had we not better end Powers up to Ishmael's room to see if he has come in, nd let him know that dinner is on the table?"

"Certainly, my dear; go, Powers, and if Mr. Worth is in is room, let him know that dinner is ready."

Powers went, but soon returned with the information that Mr. Worth was neither in his room nor in the office, nor anyhere else in the house.

"Some professional business has detained him; he will be ome after a while," said the judge.

But Bee was anxious, and when dinner was over she went pstairs to a window that overlooked the Avenue, and vatched; but, of course, in vain. Then with the restlessness ommon to intense anxiety she came down and went into he shrubbery to walk. She paced about very uneasily until he had tired herself, and then turned towards a secluded rbor at the bottom of the grounds to rest herself. She put side the vines that overhung the doorway and entered.

What did she see?

Ishmael extended upon the bench, with the late afternoon un streaming through a crevice in the arbor, shining full pon his face, which was also plagued with flies!

She had found him then, but how?

At first she thought he was only sleeping; and she was bout to withdraw from the arbor when the sound of his reathing caught her ear and alarmed her, and she crept back nd cautiously approached and looked over him.

His face was deeply flushed; the veins of his temples were wollen; and his breathing was heavy and labored. In her right Bee caught up his hand and felt his pulse. It was ull, hard, and slowly throbbing. She thought that he was ery ill—dangerously ill, and she was about to spring up nd rush to the house for help, when, in raising her head, he happened to catch his breath.

And all the dreadful truth burst upon Bee's mind, and overwhelmed her with mortification and despair!

With a sudden gasp and a low wail she sank on her knees at his side and dropped her head in her open hands and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, Ishmael, Ishmael, is it so? Have I lived to see you thus? Can a woman reduce a man to this? A proud and selfish woman have such power so to mar God's noblest work? Oh, Ishmael, my love, my love! I love you better than I love all the world besides! And I love you better than anyone else ever did or ever can; yet, yet, I would rather see you stark dead before me than to see you thus! Oh, Heaven! Oh, Savior! Oh, Father of Mercies, have pity on him and save him!" she cried.

And she wrung her hands and bent her head to look at him more closely, and her large tears dropped upon his face.

He stirred, opened his eyes, rolled them heavily, because half conscious of someone weeping over him, turned clumsily and relapsed into insensibility.

At his first motion Bee had sprung up and fled from the arbor, at the door of which she stood, with throbbing heart, watching him, through the vines. She saw that he had again fallen into that deep and comatose sleep. And she saw that his flushed and fevered face was more than ever exposed to the rays of the sun and the plague of the flies. And she crept cautiously back again, and drew her handkerchief from her pocket and laid it over his face, and turned and hurried broken-spirited from the spot.

She gained her own room and threw herself into her chair in a passion of tears and sobs.

Nothing that had ever happened in all her young life had ever grieved her anything like this. She had loved Ishmael with all her heart, and she knew that Ishmael loved Claudia with all of his; but the knowledge of this fact had never brought to her the bitter sorrow that the sight of Ishmael's condition had smitten her with this afternoon. For there was scarcely purer love among the angels in heaven than was that of Beatrice for Ishmael. First of all she desired his good; next his affection; next his presence; but there was scarcely selfishness enough in Bee's nature to wish to possess him all for her own.

First his good! And here, weeping, sobbing, and praying by turns, she resolved to devote herself to that object; to do all that she possibly could to shield him from the suspicion of this night's event; and to save him from falling into a similar misfortune.

She remained in her own room until tea-time, and then

bathed her eyes, and smoothed her hair, and went down to join the family at the table.

"Well, Bee," said the judge, "have you found Ishmael yet?"

Bee hesitated, blushed, reflected a moment, and then answered:

"Yes, uncle; he is sleeping; he is not well; and I would not have him disturbed if I were you; for sleep will do him more good than anything else."

"Certainly. Why, Bee, did you ever know me to have anybody waked up in the whole course of my life? Powers, and the rest of you, hark ye: Let no one call Mr. Worth. Let him sleep until the last trump sounds, or until he wakes up of his own accord!"

Powers bowed, and said he would see the orders observed.

Soon after tea was over, the family, fatigued with the day's excitement, retired to bed.

Bee went up to her room in the back attic; but she did not go to bed, or even undress, for she knew that Ishmael was locked out; and so she threw a light shawl around her, and seated herself at the open back window, which from its high point of view commanded every nook and cranny of the back grounds, to watch until Ishmael should wake up and approach the house, so that she might go down and admit him quietly, without disturbing the servants and exciting their curiosity and conjectures. No one should know of Ishmael's misfortune, for she would not call it fault, if any vigilance of hers could shield him. All through the still evening, all through the deep midnight, Bee sat and watched.

When Ishmael had fallen asleep, the sun was still high above the Western horizon; but when he awoke the stars were shining.

He raised himself to a sitting posture, and looked around him, utterly bewildered and unable to collect his scattered faculties, or to remember where he was, or how he came there, or what had occurred, or who he himself really was—so deathlike had been his sleep.

He had no headache; his previous habits had been too regular, for that. He was simply bewildered, but utterly bewildered, as though he had waked up in another world.

He was conscious of a weight upon his heart, but could not remember the cause of it; and whether it was grief or remorse, or both, he could not tell. He feared that it was both.

Gradually memory and misery returned to him; the dreadful day; the marriage; the feast; the parting; the lawsuit;

the two glasses of brandy, and their mortifying consequences. All the events of that day lay clearly before him now—that horrible day begun in unutterable sorrow, and ended in humiliating sin!

Was it himself, Ishmael Worth, who had suffered this sorrow, yielded to this temptation, and fallen into this sin? To what had his inordinate earthly affections brought him? He was no longer "the chevalier without fear and without reproach." He had fallen, fallen, fallen!

He remembered that when he had sunk to sleep the sun was shining and smiling all over the beautiful garden, and that even in his half-drowsy state he had noticed its glory. The sun was gone now. It had set upon his humiliating weakness. The day had given up the record of his sin and passed away forever. The day would return no more to reproach him, but its record would meet him in the judgment.

He remembered that once in his deep sleep he had half awakened and found what seemed a weeping angel bending over him, and that he had tried to rouse himself to speak; but in the effort he had only turned over and tumbled into a deeper oblivion than ever.

Who was that pitying angel visitant?

The answer came like a shock of electricity. It was Bee! Who else should it have been? It was Bee! She had sought him out when he was lost; she had found him in his weakness; she had dropped tears of love and sorrow over him.

At that thought new shame, new grief, new remorse swept in upon his soul.

He sprang upon his feet, and in doing so dropped a little white drift upon the ground. He stooped and picked it up.

It was the fine white handkerchief that on first waking up he had plucked from his face. And he knew by its soft thin feeling and its delicate scent of violets, Bee's favorite perfume, that it was her handkerchief, and she had spread it as a veil over his exposed and feverish face. That little wisp of cambric was redolent of Bee! of her presence, her purity, her tenderness.

It seemed a mere trifle; but it touched the deepest springs of his heart, and, holding it in both hands, he bowed his humble head upon it and wept.

When a man like Ishmael weeps it is no gentle summer shower, I assure you; but as the breaking up of great fountains, the rushing of mighty torrents, the coming of a flood.

He wept long and convulsively. And his deluge of tears relieved his surcharged heart and brain and did him good.

He breathed more freely; he wiped his face with this dear handkerchief, and then, all dripping wet with tears as it was, he pressed it to his lips and placed it in his bosom, over his heart, and registered a solemn vow in Heaven that this first fault of his life should also, with God's help, be his last.

Then he walked forth into the starlit garden, murmuring to himself:

"By a woman came sin and death into the world, and by a woman came redemption and salvation. Oh, Claudia, my love, farewell! farewell! And Bee, my Mary, hail!"

The holy stars no longer looked down reproachfully upon him; the harmless little insect-choristers no longer mocked him; love and forgiveness beamed down from the pure light of the first, and cheering hope sounded in the gleeful songs of the last.

Ishmael walked up the gravel-walk between the shrubbery and the house. Once, when his face was towards the house, he looked up at Bee's back window. It was open, and he saw a white, shadowy figure just within it.

Was it Bee?

His heart assured him that it was; and that anxiety for him had kept her there awake and watching.

As he drew near the house, quite uncertain as to how he should get in, he saw that the shadowy, white figure disappeared from the window; and when he went up to the back door, with the intention of rapping loudly until he should wake up the servants and gain admission, his purpose was forestalled by the door being softly opened by Bee, who stood with a shaded taper behind it.

"Oh, Bee!"

"Oh, Ishmael!"

Both spoke at once, and in a tone of irrepressible emotion.

"Come in, Ishmael," she next said kindly.

"You know, Bee?" he asked sadly, as he entered.

"Yes, Ishmael! Forgive me for knowing, for it prevented others finding out. And your secret could not rest safer, or with a truer heart than mine."

"I know it, dear Bee! dear sister, I know it. And Bee, listen! That glass of brandy was only the third of any sort of spirituous liquor that I ever tasted in my life. And I solemnly swear in the presence of Heaven and before you that it shall be the very last! Never, no, never, even as a medicine, will I place the fatal poison to my lips again."

"I believe you, Ishmael. And I am very happy. Thank God!" she said, giving him her hand.

"Dear Bee! Holy angel! I am scarcely worthy to touch it," he said, bowing reverently over that little white hand.

"'There shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.' Good-night, Ishmael!" said Bee sweetly, as she put the taper in his hand and glided like a spirit from his presence.

She was soon sleeping beside her baby sister.

And Ishmael went upstairs to bed. And the troubled night closed in peace.

The further career of Ishmael, together with the after fate of all the characters mentioned in this work, will be found in the sequel to and final conclusion of this volume, entitled, "Self-Raised; or, From the Depths."

THE END